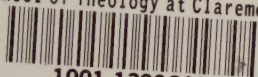


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WITH A PREFACE

BY

H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

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IN TOKEN OF

THE TRUEST AFFECTION AND RESPECT.

Preface.

THE title of this little book is fairly open to the objection that it raises expectations which the contents must fail to satisfy.

Under ordinary circumstances there would have been no reason for publishing the four Sermons which are here presented to the reader. Their main purpose is simply to illustrate some aspects of the Church's teaching, during the season of the year in which they were preached. In the case of two of them,¹ the text is taken from the services for the day. The substance of the other two is, it is hoped, not out of keeping with the solemn associations of Advent. The lessons which they inculcate can lay no claim to novelty; since, as each year comes round, these lessons are set forth from thousands of pulpits throughout Christendom, and, it need not be added, often in a much more effective manner.

That, as a rule, matters of contemporary con-

¹ Sermons II., IV.

troversy are better excluded from the Christian pulpit, is the writer's serious conviction. It is not that such matters are by any means necessarily inappropriate; but that, in his experience, there is little or no room for them. The scanty opportunities at a preacher's disposal will only enable him to traverse a very small part of the ground which the momentous issues of life and death, and the overwhelming doctrines of Grace and Redemption must inevitably suggest. It is not without a feeling of misgiving that this, the true province of the Ambassadors of Christ in the exercise of their sacred ministry, can be even momentarily abandoned; but every rule has its rightful or its necessary exceptions. During the eleven years which have passed, since it became the writer's duty to preach in St. Paul's Cathedral, he has heretofore departed from his general practice at the bidding of two important occasions, on which, as he believed, religious and moral interests were deeply involved. Of these the first was when in 1874 the Public Worship Regulation Bill was being passed through Parliament, at the dictates of an unreasoning panic, and with much apparent disregard of the historical structure, and spiritual independence of the Church of England. The other was when, after the

Bulgarian Massacres, it seemed possible that this country might be committed to a war in defence of the Mahomedan Power, which for centuries has been the persecutor of the worshippers of Christ in the East of Europe.

Recent events in the Church of England have appeared to the writer to justify another infraction of what has been his general rule. Accordingly these Sermons contain two or three explicit statements of opinion which have attracted a certain amount of public notice. Moreover when treating of topics immediately suggested by the Church service for the day, their language is at times shaped or coloured by occurrences and reflections which no man, to whom the interests of Christ's Kingdom in this country are dear, could, at least in his more serious moments, hope just now to forget. For in truth Holy Scripture keeps its eye upon human transactions, not less in this modern world of ours than in bygone days; and the preachers of the Gospel would be more ingenious than they generally are, if they did not, at least in stirring times, betray their sense of its penetrating gaze. But, when challenged to do so, a clergyman is especially bound to accept the full responsibility which may attach to his public utterances; and this reason may sufficiently account alike for

the publication and for the title of the present work.

That the imprisonment of the Rev. T. P. Dale and the Rev. R. W. Enraght marks an important crisis in the history of the Church of England, will scarcely be questioned by any careful observer of what is passing. For it has had the effect of directing general attention to questions, which in quiet times are apt to be dismissed as of only theoretical or abstract importance, or as interesting only to clergymen. The first and superficial view of the occurrence is that two incumbents of parishes have been imprisoned for a "silly and obstinate adherence to an illegal ceremonial." The more accurate, and indeed the legal account of their offence is that they have been guilty of contempt of Court. Yet it must at once and of course occur to everybody that, beyond any other class of her Majesty's subjects, clergymen would naturally desire to show all possible respect to any Court administering justice in the name and by the authority of the Queen; nor has any reason been produced to show why the learned Judge, whose painful task it has been to inflict the penalty in question, is not personally entitled to all the courtesy and respect which his rank and profession of themselves deserve. If, then, his inhibitions

have been disregarded, not once or twice only, but again and again, by clergymen of high character, who foresee the personal and social inconveniences, and, what is of more importance, who appreciate the grave moral import attaching to what they do, surely there is occasion for grave and anxious inquiry. There is occasion for considering whether some error in legislation may not, for the time being, have made obedience to the law of the land inconsistent with some higher sense of duty in the case of unquestionably good men, who are also not demonstrably unreasonable.

Such an error, as the writer ventures to believe, will be found in the measures, by which the Legislature first transferred the Final Appeal in ecclesiastical causes from the old Court of Delegates to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, and then more recently, substituted the Judge created by the Public Worship Regulation Act, for the old Official Principals of the Provincial Courts of Canterbury and York.

In the memorable preamble of the Statute² which marks the epoch of the rupture with the See of Rome, the relations of the Church and State of England are described as follows :—

² 24 Henry VIII. c. 19.

“Where by divers sundry old authentick histories and chronicles, it is manifestly declared and expressed, that this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king, having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same; unto whom a body politick, compact of all sorts and degrees of people, divided in terms, and by names of spirituality and temporality, been bounden and owen to bear next to God, a natural and humble obedience; he being also institute and furnished, by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God, with plenary, whole and entire power, pre-eminence, authority, prerogative, and jurisdiction, to render and yield justice, and final determination to all manner of folk, resiants, or subjects within this his realm, in all causes, matters, debates, and contentions, happening to occur, insurge, or begin within the limits thereof, without restraint or provocation to any foreign princes or potentates of the world; *the body spiritual whereof having power, when any cause of the law divine happened to come in question, or of spiritual learning, then it was declared, interpreted, and shewed by that part of the said body politick, called the spirituality,* now being usually called the English Church, which always hath been reputed, and also found of that sort that both for knowledge, integrity and sufficiency of number, it hath been always thought, *and is also at this hour, sufficient and meet of itself, without the intermeddling of any exterior person or persons, to declare and determine all such doubts, and to administer all such offices and duties, as to their room spiritual doth appertain,* for the due administration whereof, and to keep them from all corruption and sinister affection, the king's most noble progenitors, and the antecessors of the nobles of this realm, have sufficiently endowed the said Church, both with honour and possessions; and the laws temporal, for the trial of property of lands and goods, and for the conservation of the people of this realm in unity and peace, without rapine or spoil, was and yet is administered, adjudged, and

executed by sundry judges, and ministers of the other part of the said body politick called the temporalty ; and both their authorities and jurisdictions do conjoin together in the due administration of justice the one to help the other.”

Among the inferences which Bishop Gibson draws from this important document are these : that Ecclesiastical Courts should interpret all statutes relating to spiritual questions ; that when ecclesiastical causes came before the Court of Delegates, that Court should be composed only of ecclesiastics and ecclesiastical lawyers ; and that in matters of policy relating to religion, the Crown should have spiritual persons as advisers.³ It may be true enough, that in the high-handed proceedings which characterized the after-years of Henry VIII. the principle of this preamble was treated with scant respect.⁴ But it is still part of the law of

³ Gibson, Codex, Int. ; cf. *Judgments of the Judicial Committee by Brodrick and Freemantle*, Int. xxxi. note ².

⁴ The temper of these proceedings is best illustrated by the King's commission to Bonner, which intimates, that since Thomas Cromwell was too much occupied to hold ordinations, the duty of holding them was entrusted to the Bishop of London. “*Quia tamen ipse Thomas Cromwell negotiis adeo præpeditus existit, quod ad omnem jurisdictionem Nobis uti Supremo Capiti hujusmodi competentem in suâ personâ expediendam non sufficiat, vices tibi nostras committendas fore, teque licentiandum esse decernimus ad ordinandum quoscunque idoneos invenies, ad omnes etiam sacros et presbyteratus ordines promovendum.*” It is difficult to think that the power of ordination was included under “*ea quæ tibi ex sacris literis divinitus commissa esse dignoscuntur*” in the saving clause of this document. See Dixon's History of the Church of England, ii. 168, note. Such profane assumptions as are made in this commission would hardly be defended by the wildest of our modern Erastians.

England; and unless it was justifiable to induce the clergy to consent to a great change in their circumstances, by a profession of respect for their spiritual rights and character which was never meant to be acted on, they may appeal to it at this hour, and may expect that their appeal will not be wholly disregarded.

Now the lately imprisoned clergy could not recognize the authority of Lord Penzance as an ecclesiastical judge, and they went to prison rather than commit themselves to any action which would imply such recognition. They contend that, instead of representing, as did the late Dean of the Arches, those judicial powers which reside in the see of Canterbury, Lord Penzance is really a civil judge, invested with no more spiritual authority than an Act of Parliament can confer. The doubts which had been entertained as to the soundness of this opinion might have appeared to be removed by recent proceedings in the Court of Queen's Bench. On Lord Penzance's behalf, the Attorney-General is reported to have urged that "Lord Penzance had, by force of the (Public Worship) Act, become Dean of the Arches," and that "he now holds the office by virtue of the Act of Parliament." From this the Attorney-General argued that the Canons of the Church, which

oblige an ecclesiastical judge to make certain oaths and declarations "do not apply" to Lord Penzance; since "he is a layman, and is a lay judge of a King's Court, and is not himself bound by these canons which do not bind the laity."⁵ These arguments were apparently endorsed by the judgment of the Court. The case has been more recently heard by the Lords of Appeal: and the imprisoned clergy have been released on the ground that the writ of imprisonment had not been opened in the presence of the Judges of the Queen's Bench. But it is right to add that while giving this decision the Lords of Appeal ruled that Lord Penzance is not and was not when first appointed, a new Judge with a new jurisdiction, but first of all a divisional and then the sole and actual Judge of the Old Court of Arches and of the Provincial Court of York.⁶ Difficult as it is for laymen to reconcile this opinion with that of such an authority as the late Sir Alexander Cockburn, they must probably accept it as finally closing the long and significant hesitations of the law. The Church's sense of wrong is however wholly untouched by it. Legally speaking, Lord Penzance may be henceforth the undisputed Judge

⁵ Cf. *Guardian*, Dec. 15, 1880.

⁶ See Report, *Times*, Jan. 17, 1881.

of the Provincial Court of Canterbury : but it is certain, that, speaking ecclesiastically and morally, he represents a very different kind of authority from that of the judges who have heretofore filled that venerable chair.

The 127th Canon runs as follows :—

The Quality and Oath of Judges.

No man shall hereafter be admitted a Chancellor, Commissary, or Official, to exercise any ecclesiastical jurisdiction, except he be of the full age of six-and-twenty years at the least, and one that is learned in the Civil and Ecclesiastical Laws, and is at the least a Master of Arts, or Bachelor of Law, and is reasonably well practised in the course thereof, as likewise well affected, and zealously bent to religion, touching whose life and manners no evil example is had ; and except, before he enter into or execute any such office, he shall take the oath of the King's supremacy in the presence of the Bishop, or in the open court, and shall subscribe to the Articles of Religion agreed upon in the convocation, in the year one thousand five hundred sixty and two, and shall also swear that he will, to the uttermost of his understanding, deal uprightly and justly in his office, without respect or favour or reward ; the said oaths and subscription to be recorded by a Registrar then present. And likewise all Chancellors, Commissaries, Officials, Registrars, and all others that do now possess or execute any places of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, or service, shall before Christmas next, in the presence of the Archbishop or Bishop, or in open court, under whom or where they exercise their offices, take the same oaths, and subscribe, as before is said ; or, upon refusal so to do, shall be suspended from the execution of their offices, until they shall take the said oaths, and subscribe as aforesaid."

The provisions of this Canon were complied with in the case of the last Deans of the Arches, Sir S. Lushington and Sir R. J. Phillimore. They have not been complied with by Lord Penzance. It is understood that his non-compliance was deliberate, not accidental; he could not defer to the provisions of the Canon without implying that the Statute was of itself insufficient to make him what he claims to be. Yet the Canons, however overridden by Acts of Parliament, are unrepealed laws of the Church of England; and they are moreover laws which it is the business of the Archbishop's Official Principal to enforce upon the clergy. For alleged disobedience to these Canons, which he himself disobeys, Lord Penzance has quite recently proceeded to deprive a clergyman of all his preferments. It is therefore no longer possible to contend that Lord Penzance is a judge standing in the same relation to the confidence and conscience of the Church as the distinguished judges whose successor he claims to be. For he himself insists that whatever his right may be to rule her clergy, his obligation to obey her laws is of a totally different character from theirs; that, in fact, no such obligation exists.

It is sometimes said that a distinction of this kind is merely "technical," and would not be

likely to have any weight except in the morbid conscience of a clergyman. But phrases like this are apt to be misleading; and it cannot be easily allowed that, whatever the legal worth of the 127th Canon may be, its religious value is other than important. If the chief pastors of the Church are permitted by her to delegate to men not in holy orders, but "learned in the civil and ecclesiastical laws," not the least solemn portion of their vast responsibilities, she has a right to insist that this delegation shall only be made under adequate safeguards and guarantees. These guarantees and safeguards are provided by the Canon. If the Canons of the Church do not bind Lord Penzance because he is a "layman," they do bind the Archbishops, who are not laymen, and who therefore, it is respectfully submitted, cannot delegate the exercise of the judicial functions which appertain to their Sees except under the conditions which the Church has prescribed. Certainly Lord Penzance, in compliance with the provisions of the Act of Parliament, has signed a declaration to the effect that he is "a member of the Church of England." That declaration may mean no more than that he has not formally associated himself with some other religious body. It does not necessarily mean, in its

modern acceptation, that he is a communicant, or even that he believes the Nicene Creed; it is a declaration which is in practice consistent with repudiation of almost everything that "a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." Lord Penzance may well be an earnestly believing and even devout Churchman, but the Church has no public assurance that this is the case. He is the Archbishop's deputy, in the sense that the Archbishop nominated him to a position, which would in due time lead on to the official Principalship of the Court of Arches; but unless the Archbishop can entrust the judicial functions of his great office to a layman of whom the Church knows nothing, except that he refuses obedience to those Canons which regulate the very office that he claims to hold, Lord Penzance is not, at least in the old sense of the term, Official Principal of the Court of Canterbury. So long as the 127th Canon is unrepealed by the Church, Lord Penzance is a standing violation of her laws; and there is surely something to be said for the conscientious difficulties of clergymen respecting any act which would involve the acknowledgment of his ecclesiastical authority.

After all, it will be said, Parliament can do what it likes in these matters; and that which

Parliament enacts is legal, whatever ecclesiastics may have to say about it. So far as Parliament can make Lord Penzance Dean of the Arches, he is undoubtedly the legal Dean of the Arches. But how far is this doctrine to be carried? If Parliament were to enact that some distinguished agnostic should become forthwith, without any profession of faith, or ordination, or consecration, Archbishop of Canterbury; he would be the *legal* Archbishop of Canterbury. But would his ministerial acts be worth anything in the judgment of a believing Christian? Would he confer valid ordination, or administer a real Eucharist, or address the flock of Christ with any semblance of spiritual authority? Would Christian ministers claim on behalf of his rule that cruelly misused precept of the great Apostle's, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers"? If they did, would a believing laity take their advice? Certainly this is an extreme supposition; but a supposition of this kind enables us to place a much less flagrant violation of the rights and conscience of the Christian Church in its true light. During the first French Revolution some very bold, but strictly *legal* experiments were made in this direction: but it has not generally been thought that they were successful. An English Parlia-

ment is not likely to imitate the pedantic follies of the French Convention; but it may, as did the Convention, give a new impetus to Ultramontanism, by legislation which attributes to Statute Law a power to confer spiritual authority; it may thus range the claims of law, and the claims of an enlightened Christian conscience in a disastrous opposition to each other.

Opinions will differ as to the course which has been taken by Mr. Dale and Mr. Enraght, in order to express their inability to recognize the jurisdiction of Lord Penzance as a spiritual judge. It is asked why they could not have submitted to his decision under protest. But if they had done so, what would have been the result? The world would have taken note of their submission, and have paid scant attention to their protest. There was once a great Englishman who broke the *law*, but who yet, says Hume, “has merited great
“renown with posterity, for the bold stand which
“he made in defence of the *laws* and liberties of
“his country. After the imposing of ship-money,
“Charles, in order to discourage all opposition,
“had proposed this question to the judges,
““whether in a case of necessity, for the defence
“of the kingdom, he might not impose the taxa-
“tion, and whether he were not sole judge of the

“necessity?’ These guardians of law and liberty
i “replied with great complaisance, ‘That in a case
“of necessity he might impose that taxation, and
“that he was sole judge of the necessity.’ Hamp-
“den had been rated at twenty shillings, for an
“estate which he possessed in the County of
“Buckingham; yet, notwithstanding this declared
“opinion of the judges, notwithstanding the great
“power and sometimes rigorous maxims of the
“Crown, notwithstanding the small prospect of
“relief from Parliament; he resolved, rather than
“tamely submit to so illegal an imposition, to
“stand a legal prosecution, and expose himself to
“all the indignation of the Court. The case was
“argued, during twelve days, in the Exchequer
“Chamber, before all the judges of England; and
“the nation regarded with the utmost anxiety
“every circumstance of this celebrated trial. The
“event was easily foreseen: but the principles and
“reasonings and behaviour of the parties engaged
“in the trial were much canvassed, and inquired
“into: and nothing could equal the favour paid
“to one side, except the hatred which attended
“the other.”⁷ Hume concludes his narrative by
saying that “The prejudiced judges, four ex-
“cepted, gave sentence in favour of the Crown.

⁷ Hist. of England (Ed. 1822), vol. vii. p. 221, ch. lii.

“Hampden, however, obtained by the trial the
“end for which he had so generously sacrificed
“his safety and his quiet: the people were roused
“from their lethargy, and became sensible of the
“danger to which their liberties were exposed.
“These national questions were canvassed in every
“company; and the more they were examined, the
“more evident did it appear to many, that liberty
“was totally subverted, and an unusual and arbitrary authority exercised over the Kingdom.”^s

Is it altogether impossible that in days to come some historian of the Church of England will frame a paragraph, to describe what is passing before our eyes, on the model of Hume’s eulogy of Hampden?

The immediate cause of the imprisonment of Mr. Dale and Mr. Enraght is their refusal to acknowledge Lord Penzance’s authority as a *spiritual* judge; but if his spiritual jurisdiction was as indisputable as was that of Sir R. J. Phillimore, there would still be a grave difficulty behind, of older standing, and in some respects of more formidable aspect.

This difficulty is presented by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, as the modern Final Court of Appeal in ecclesiastical causes.

^s Ibid., c. lii. p. 224.

It must be admitted that the old Court of Delegates was not the best possible expression of the principle of the preamble of 24 Henry VIII., that spiritual causes should be judged by the spirituality. But so long as that court existed, the Crown was always at liberty to keep faith with the Church by acting on the rule in question. For the purpose of hearing ecclesiastical causes, the Court of Delegates *might* always be composed of ecclesiastics. True, it also might not. Still, when rejecting the usurped jurisdiction of Rome, the Church of England had trusted herself to the faith and piety of English Sovereigns; and whatever from time to time may have happened in practice, there was nothing to prevent a loyal recognition of the principle affirmed in the Reformation Settlement until the year 1832.

In that year it was provided by 2 and 3 William IV. c. 92, that the hearing of appeals in ecclesiastical cases, which had been hitherto carried before the Court of Delegates, should be transferred to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; and in 1833 by 3 and 4 William IV. c. 41, the Archbishops and Bishops who were Privy Councillors were placed on the Committee when hearing ecclesiastical appeals; it being provided

that no such appeal was to be heard without the presence of one Archbishop or Bishop. But, this provision notwithstanding, the real effect of the measure was to transfer the effective government of the Church to lawyers, who might or might not be Churchmen, or even Christians, and to deprive the Crown of the power of insisting on the observance of the principle set forth in the preamble of 24 Henry VIII. Under the new arrangement, the attendant Bishops only decorated by their presence a tribunal which was essentially civil and lay; they lent to its decisions a semblance of ecclesiastical authority which it could not in fact possess, and which was only calculated to embarrass tender consciences. It was the Gorham case which first revealed the unfitness of such a Court to deal with questions concerning the great truths of the Christian Revelation; and Bishop Blomfield endeavoured, although in vain, to remedy what he felt to be a serious danger to the Church. In the debate on the Bishop's Bill,⁹ Lord Brougham, the real author of the new Court—

“ Quite concurred with his noble friend that the Judicial Committee was framed without any expectations whatever that cases of this kind [i. e. such as the Gorham case] would come before

⁹ Friday, May 31, 1850.

it ; it was framed with a view to a totally different class of cases. Had it been otherwise, in all probability some different arrangements would have been introduced."

And yet this Court, which, by its author's confession, is thus unfit to deal with questions of Christian doctrine, has for thirty years since the debate referred to been actively engaged in dealing with doctrines of the gravest import. These thirty years have been years of incessant controversy, and vital truths of the Christian Revelation have been again and again matters of litigation. The nature of Justification, the condition of the lost in the life to come, the worth and inspiration of Holy Scripture, the Presence of Christ our Lord in the Holy Communion, the terms under which admission to Communion is permissible, are among the subjects on which this Court has undertaken to pronounce. It professes, indeed, to be merely ascertaining the legal sense of the formularies of the Church of England. But the principles on which it interprets these formularies are often not the principles by which the true sense of a theological document is really ascertained ; and, after all, the formularies of the Church are something more than clauses in an Act of Parliament. In themselves indeed the decisions of such a Court on matters of Ritual are of far less importance

than its decisions on Christian doctrine; but they have led to as much or more controversy. The slight legislative changes made in this Court in 1873-5, whereby the Bishops have become assessors, instead of members of the Court, disappointed the hopes which had at first been raised, and have resulted in no real improvement. Of this Court the wise and gentle author of the *Christian Year* used to say that he "could not anyhow get it under the head of the Fifth Commandment;" and that he longed for a time when he might show, by some overt act, that he rejected its claim to govern his conscience as a priest of the Church of England. The decisions of such a tribunal must always be respectfully considered as the work of trained minds of the highest ability; but in matters touching the faith and discipline of the Church of God, they could not, from the nature of the case, command the submission which is due from a Christian conscience to those who have been empowered to rule His Church by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who criticize existing institutions are bound to say what they desire in the way of improvement; to find fault with things as they are, and to shrink from offering a substantive proposal, which may in its turn be criticized, is at

once cowardly and mischievous. Moreover, a state of things in which clerical obedience is difficult, if not impossible, is highly detrimental to the Christian character, not to speak of its effects upon the well-being and progress of the Church. The writer, therefore, ventures to repeat what he has said elsewhere as to the remedies which appear to be required by our present difficulties.

The immediate need of the Church of England is the application of the principles of natural justice to the work of Church administration. If the Rubrical Law of the Church, or some recent interpretation of it, is to be enforced rigidly on one section of the clergy, it surely should be enforced on all. If creeds may be omitted, and the plainest Rubrical directions deliberately set at nought without any rebuke on the part of authority, it cannot be right to visit certain ceremonial excesses, if they be excesses, with imprisonment and deprivation. This would seem to be too obvious to need or to bear stating, and yet experience shows that to state it is not unnecessary.

And here the writer cannot but hope for eventual sympathy from the higher and more Christian temper of the party, which, so far as it may justly be identified with the Church Association, is re-

sponsible for the results of the recent prosecutions. The writer does not dwell upon the obvious consideration that the law courts are open to good Churchmen as well as to members of the Church Association; and that when slovenliness and irreverence are deemed to be marks of spirituality, they will often issue in acts and language which are as certainly illegal as they are distressing to the faith and piety of instructed Christians. For assuredly nothing would be ~~more~~ regrettable than a retaliatory suit, however much there may have been to provoke it, or whatever be the warranted probabilities of its success; since such success would be dearly paid for by disregard of those precepts of our Saviour which alone have hitherto availed to prevent some effort of the kind. But the party which is more or less responsible for the recent imprisonments might surely consider what is likely to be the effect of its policy upon interests which many of its members have very sincerely at heart. They believe themselves to possess the Gospel in its purity and simplicity; and they are anxious that others who, as they think, have encumbered Scriptural Christianity with traditions of human origin, should be brought to the knowledge of what they themselves conceive to be the Truth. Can they sup-

pose that this object will be advanced by proceedings such as those of the Church Association; by acts and language which recall the unconverted Saul of Tarsus "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," much more than the devoted missionary of later years whose "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved." If it were certain that the theological teaching of any body of men was simply that of the New Testament, would not the moral temper, implied by these proceedings, appear to be something widely different? And if it should be thought that the well-being of a party, with which he has himself never had any relations, although he has known and loved many of its members, does not concern the writer of these lines, he may at least be pardoned for referring to the effect of recent prosecutions upon that common cause of Christ Our Lord as against indifference and unbelief, which is the concern of all of us. The prominence which has been lately given to grave differences within the Church has resulted, as the writer has reason to know, in serious additions to the ranks of infidelity; and the gravity of such occurrences is not diminished because Christians may agree to think that, logically speaking, inconsistencies or

faults in their own conduct and temper ought not to prejudice the claims of Christianity.

When the writer was a young man at college some thirty years or more ago, he knew an elderly clergyman who was an earnest adherent of what are called, with whatever accuracy, Evangelical opinions. Certainly this good man's preaching did not impress either his parishioners or the writer very fruitfully. His favourite topics were the erroneousness of "popery," and the "danger of thinking to be saved by works;" but there was no Roman Catholic resident in the parish, and the "works" to which a large proportion of the parishioners were somewhat conspicuously addicted were not of a character to suggest the question of being saved at all. Yet whatever was the value of this clergyman's ministrations in the pulpit, there could be no question as to the warmth of his heart when he was out of it; and the writer recalls, with gratitude and affection, many of his incidental expressions of opinion. But among other matters, he would often contrast "Evangelical religion" with "popery," by saying that the latter relied on force and violence for the propagation of its tenets, while the former trusted entirely to the converting influences of God the Holy Spirit. In his quaint

misuse of the Apocalypse, the Church of Rome was "the harlot, drunk with the blood of the saints;" while "Evangelical" Christians, as he conceived of them, only repeated to others the Apostolic entreaty, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This contrast would doubtless have been imperilled by a study either of the life of Calvin, or of the proceedings of the Puritans in the seventeenth century; but the revered friend who is referred to, held it in perfect good faith. His generalization was the fruit not of any acquaintance with history, but of the kindliness of his own Christian heart; and he would have fully shared the distress to which such touching and generous expression has been given by the Rev. S. Garratt, of Ipswich, could he have supposed that a day would come when the names of Horsemonger, Holloway, and Warwick gaols would be associated, as they now are, with the controversial enterprises of the party to which he used fondly and always to give the tender and sacred name of Evangelical. The writer cannot doubt that there must be many who like Mr. Garratt share the opinions of this excellent man, and who feel it a duty to discourage proceedings and a temper which are

ruinous to whatever is best in Evangelicalism itself.

But if anything more than a breathing-time from persecution on one side and resistance on the other is to result from our present difficulties, the Courts which determine ecclesiastical causes should be placed upon a footing in harmony with the Divinely-appointed constitution of the Church, and with the great Statute of the Reformation, to which reference has already been so often made. With this object, the Repeal of the Public Worship Regulation Act would first of all engage the attention of Churchmen; difficult of attainment, as, under any circumstances, such an object would be. This would probably be followed by legislation, with a view to cheapen and simplify legal procedures in the Provincial and Diocesan Courts, which would thus in their integrity re-enter on their old historical relation to the Church and the Episcopate. Finally, and above all, the Supreme Court of Appeal should be reconstituted, so as to consist of Bishops, elected by the Episcopate, advised by lawyers, and, if necessary, by divines, with an appeal from its decisions, at least in matters of faith, to the whole body of English Bishops. The writer does not understand how any question could be raised by a conscientious

and instructed Churchman as to the authority of such a Court. If its decisions did not plainly contradict the moral law or the truths of Divine Revelation, there could surely be no doubt about the duty of obeying them.

Whether this or some other particular proposal be finally adopted matters but little, if only a great principle can be respected. This principle is that the Church should be really ruled by those chief pastors to whom Christ Our Lord has given a commission to rule it, and that it should not be ruled by lawyers, who, however able and accomplished, may yet be advisedly of opinion that the Christian revelation is an exploded fable. The justice of this plea must surely be acknowledged by some at least of those who see in the Christian clergy only the least desirable of the learned professions. What would be said by the members of Lincoln's Inn, or of the Temple, if the affairs of those great societies, instead of being regulated by their own benchers, were under the control of a committee of eminent clergymen, or if there were an appeal respecting the meaning of Statute Law from the decisions of the Judges to the bench of Bishops? If in these days men fear not to put forth unconsecrated hands to touch the Ark of God, they may nevertheless admit the solid common sense of the

old saw, which forbids the cobbler to go beyond his last. Ecclesiastics have long ceased to attempt the rôle of a Wolsey or a Richelieu; Talleyrand was an apostate before he became a statesman. Is the day very far distant when a due sense of the fitness of things will make it impossible for a great civilian to pronounce upon such questions as were raised in the case of "Essays and Reviews"?

This principle has recently been branded as "extreme;" but thirty years ago it was held by authorities, to which no such exception could be taken. When, on Tuesday, February 5, 1850, the Bishop of London (Blomfield) had moved the first reading of the "Proceedings against Clergy Bill," in the House of Lords, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Sumner) expressed his concurrence with the object of the Bill, and then said that

"The present state of the law on the doctrine and discipline of the Church was acknowledged to be excessively defective; and he must say that it was chiefly owing to the defective constitution of the Court of Appeal that the Church now stood in a position of some difficulty. It could never be satisfactory that questions relating to the doctrine and discipline of the Church should be submitted to a tribunal of laymen. They ought to be submitted to a tribunal of ecclesiastics, and such would be the constitution of the tribunal proposed by the present bill."¹

¹ *Hansard*. Vol. cviii., page 334, 3rd series.

On Monday, June 3, 1850, Bishop Blomfield, who moved the second reading, said,

“This brings me to a consideration of the principle which is embodied in the Bill now under your Lordships’ consideration ; that the decision of purely spiritual questions should be left to spiritual judges—not merely ecclesiastical but spiritual judges. I venture to call this a constitutional principle—one which has been recognized in the constitution of this Christian country from the earliest period of its history.”

After adverting to some other topics, the Bishop continued,

“But, my Lords, I would not be understood to rest my case entirely upon the probabilities of superior fitness in point of theological learning. I rest it, also, and in the first place, on the inherent and indefeasible right of the Church to teach and maintain the truth by means of her spiritual pastors and rulers ; a right inherent in her original constitution, and expressly granted to her by her Divine Head, in the terms of the Apostolical commission. On this point I will say no more ; it will probably be dwelt upon by some of those who will follow me in the debate, but I cannot conclude without protesting against an inference which may possibly be drawn from the fact of my having laid so much stress upon Acts of Parliament, and ancient practice, and upon the question of comparative competency, and fitness of Judges, that I think lightly of what is in truth the fundamental and vital principle involved in this subject, namely, the inherent and inalienable right of the Bishops of the Church of England, to be the Judges of questions of its doctrine duly submitted to them.”²

² *Hansard*. Vol. cxi., page 598, 3rd series.

It is somewhat invidiously suggested that if the Church were to be ruled by Spiritual Courts the supremacy of the Crown would be done away with.³ How can this be when Spiritual Courts are implicitly guaranteed to the Church by the very Act which cut off appeals to Rome, with a view to securing the Royal Supremacy? The Royal Supremacy is not necessarily identical with the Supremacy of the great lawyers. The real and beneficent purpose of the Royal Supremacy is that in the last resort the Queen should see that equal justice is done to all her subjects. This object would be secured, if, on appeal in Ecclesiastical causes, the Queen were to be advised by Bishops who took counsel with lawyers on points of law, instead of being advised by lawyers, who have in at least one grave case differed from the attendant Bishops in questions of theology. The Church of England treats it as a slander to suppose that, in admitting the Queen's "chief government," we thereby "give to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word or of the sacraments,"⁴ yet the judge who decides what doctrine may or may not be taught by a clergyman, "ministers God's Word," or something else, with much greater authority and effect

³ See *Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1881, p. 232.

⁴ Art. 37.

than does the preacher, whose utterances he thus regulates; and if this judge is a layman deriving his authority not from the Church, but from the Queen, it is difficult to reconcile the practice of the Realm with the language of the Article. On the other hand, an Episcopal Final Court of Appeal would altogether harmonize with "that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in Holy Scriptures by God Himself; that is, that they should rule all states and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers."⁵ For if the members of such a court were elected by the Episcopate, they would all have been nominated to their Sees by the Crown, and no effect could be given to their decisions on any question of property unless the Crown lent the aid of its coercive jurisdiction.

It is urged by the opponents of the Church's spiritual freedom that Ecclesiastics have often shown themselves unfit to be entrusted with power; and a catena of occasions is easily made out, on which they are said to have notoriously abused it. That these charges are often exaggerated through ignorance or prejudice might easily

⁵ Art. 37.

be shown to be the case,⁶ but whatever weight we may attach to them, does it follow that the natural use and employment of a great organization is forfeited because it has been more or less frequently perverted? Unless the wise maxim be admitted, that “*usum non tollit abusus*,” there is no institution in the country which does not merit condemnation; and the equity of a great people will surely admit that if an order like the Episcopate be retained at all in a place of trust and honour, it should exercise the functions which, historically speaking, are its immemorial attributes.

It is natural that those who on general grounds of policy object altogether to the present relations of Church and State in England, should be anxious to perpetuate a condition of things which, at the least, presses hard upon the consciences of a large and influential section of the clergy. It is natural, although perhaps not quite generous, to insist that the advantages which the Church derives from her historical position in the country, shall only be retained if she is willing permanently to submit to an anomalous judicature of modern origin, which threatens her with something akin

⁶ Mr. Dixon has done good service by illustrating this position from the records of the Reformation. *Hist. of Ch. of Eng.*, ii. 137, 265-6, &c.

to suffocation. There is indeed, abstractedly, no necessary connexion between establishment and spiritual asphyxia. But it is less singular that such a connexion should be assumed to exist by those who avowedly desire to see the Church deprived of her existing resources, than that this assumption should be made in practice if not in terms by others, who attribute to the temporal accidents of spiritual life even an exaggerated degree of importance. Certain it is that the existing condition of things constitutes an element of danger, which, in times like the present, may easily become formidable. Unless we can be assured that no more persecutions will be permitted, the grave principles for which good men have recently been content to suffer reproach and imprisonment will again challenge vindication, and with the same or more serious results. Can it be necessary to invite this contingency? Few, if any, Churchmen desire to see the Church disestablished and disendowed; but if it be a question whether it is better to be turned out of house and home, without any clothes, and even on a winter's night, or to be strangled by a silken cord in a well-furnished drawing-room, what man, or Church, will have any difficulty in arriving at a decision?

That such legislative measures as have been suggested could under any circumstances be easily carried no reasonable person will suppose; the obstacles which would present themselves to the prelate or statesman who might essay to relieve the Church of her existing embarrassments are indeed enormous. In Church legislation, as in morals, the descent of Avernus is easy enough; the difficulties begin when we endeavour to return. But the recent utterances of the Archbishop of Canterbury and of the Bishops of Ely, Salisbury, and Lichfield, may well encourage Churchmen to hope that this grave crisis in our religious history will not be without results which may more than atone for disasters, serious in themselves, and very threatening as regards the future. It is one of the special notes of Christ's Kingdom among men, that it wins its way by apparent failure, that—

“Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso
Ducit opes animumque ferro.”

May God grant it to be thus here and now, so that the painful occurrences of the last two months shall hereafter be only and gratefully remembered as the harbingers of a new era of harmony and progress in the religious life of the English Church and people.

3, AMEN COURT, ST. PAUL'S, *January 27th, 1881,*

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SERMON I.

The Coming of the Divine Kingdom.

“ Only one way to Life :
One Faith, deliver'd once for all ;
One holy Band, endow'd with Heaven's high call ;
One earnest, endless strife ;—
'This is the Church th' Eternal framed of old.”

Lyra Apostolica.

SERMON I.

The Coming of the Divine Kingdom.

“The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.”—ST. LUKE xvii. 20.

THIS was our Lord’s reply to a question which the Pharisees had addressed to Him. They had asked when the Kingdom of God should come.

I.

In asking this question the Pharisees were the spokesmen of the great mass of their countrymen. There was a general expectation of a good time coming; of a time so good and so satisfying to man’s best hopes that it would seem like a reign of God upon the earth. “The Kingdom of God!” To the mind of the people at large that cherished expression often did not convey any very definite sense. The phrase had come to them, across the ages, from Psalmists and from Prophets; it had been repeated by father to son for a long series of generations; but whenever any positive meaning was now popularly attached to it, it was, on the whole, a meaning which was not originally intended. At the present day, we all of us read into our religious language, if we use

it at all sincerely, the wants and the circumstances of our own lives and age; we read our own meaning into it so often and so resolutely that what it was meant to mean often becomes, in our eyes, first obscure and then improbable; and this is what had happened to the Jews of old. They were, when our Lord came, a conquered people, that had not yet forgotten its days of freedom and of glory; and so in their eyes the Kingdom of God seemed to be merely a new national future; when the sacred soil would be cleared of the Roman invader; when the legionary, and the tax-gatherer, and the governor, and the lictors, and the eagles, would have disappeared in utter rout and confusion from the emancipated land; and when Israel, in her restored unity and strength, would be what she once had been under David and Solomon, or something yet more glorious.

This was the Kingdom of God of which the Pharisees were thinking when they put their question to our Blessed Lord. Having this idea of what the Kingdom of God was to be, they asked Him when it would come; and He took the true meaning of their question to be, how would they know that it was coming. They thought, naturally and reasonably enough, that such a kingdom as this, succeeding to, and being based on a great political change, could not come without some tokens of its approach; that some symptoms of social and revolutionary movement would be manifest at least to discerning eyes. How could the fabric of the Roman power, even in

a single province, be broken up and disappear; how could a new order of things be prepared to take its place, without some indications that might be read, of what was at hand? When, in after-years, the great empire itself tottered to its fall, men traced the presages of coming ruin long before it came. Long before the Indian mutiny of 1857, our English Government was warned that mischief was in the air. The question of the Pharisees was in accordance with experience, when it presumed that a great change, such as they anticipated, would not take place without being preceded by events of a nature to announce it.

Supposing the Pharisees to be right in their idea of the Kingdom of God, their question, or rather its drift, was reasonable enough; but then they were wrong in this their fundamental assumption. Our Lord first set aside their expectations as to the coming of the Kingdom; He then went on to say what, in its essence, the Kingdom was.

The Kingdom of God, He said, cometh not with observation: its advance is not obvious to the senses and curiosity of men; it moves onwards and diffuses itself, without being perceived and commented on. And the reason for this is, that the Kingdom is in its essence not a purely political fabric, such as the materialized and unspiritual fancy of the later Jews, misled by a false patriotism, had conceived it to be, but a spiritual realm, touching this earth indeed by its contact with, and

empire over, human souls, but reaching far, far away from the sphere of sense, aye, to the utmost confines of the world invisible. Men were not to say, "Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God was within" them.¹ Its seat of power lay wholly beyond the province and capacity of eye and ear; it was set up in the hearts and consciences and wills of men; and until the most secret processes of the human soul could be displayed in sensuous forms beneath the light of day, the coming of such a Kingdom must needs be "not with observation."

Observe that our Lord speaks of the "coming of the Kingdom." For when it had come, it could no longer, from the nature of the case, be thus wholly invisible. It was to consist, at least in part, of men still living on the earth; and living men who act and speak as members of a common society cannot but attract observation. We now see the earthly side of the Kingdom of God in the visible Church of Christ. The visible Church is indeed only a very small part of the vast empire of souls that is ruled by God. But when our Lord had given to a company of disciples a code of conduct in His Sermon on the Mount; and in a series of parables had foretold how this company would presently grow; and had bequeathed it His best promises of support and consolation in His discourse in the Supper room; and, when He had died, and had risen from death, and had ascended into heaven; and further, had sent down God the Holy

¹ St. Luke xvii. 21.

Spirit to quicken and invigorate it with a superhuman life; and lastly, by the words and acts of His apostles, had given it a complete and final form, so that to the end of time the faithful should know what He, its Founder, had willed it to be; the Kingdom of God, thus visibly constituted, could not escape observation. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."² But its coming had been without observation; it stole in upon the world, like a breeze or an inspiration. The Roman power stood unshaken in its strength and pride; there were no signs of its approaching dissolution; but the Divine Kingdom had also come. It was even within the souls of some of those who heard the announcement; it had been welcomed to their hearts and minds; but it had not attracted the attention of the world.

II.

"Not with observation." Let us trace this characteristic of the coming of the Kingdom of God, at some of the more solemn moments of history.

Never did the Kingdom of God come among men in a manner so direct, so blessed, and yet so awful, as when He, the King of Kings, the Infinite and Everlasting Being, deigned, in His unutterable love and condescension, to robe Himself with a human Body and a

² St. Matt. v. 14.

human Soul in the womb of a Virgin mother, and thus in human form to hold high court among the sons of men. Never did the King of heaven so come among us men, as when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa. Compared with this stupendous event, the greatest catastrophes, the sublimest triumphs, the most critical epochs in the world's history, dwindle into insignificance ; " God manifest in the flesh " was a phenomenon, the like of which had never yet been seen, and it must throw into the shade every other event in the annals of mankind. And what amount of public notice did it attract ? What were the thoughts and interests of the mass of men in Palestine on the day of the Nativity ? The last news from Rome, the seat of empire ; the sayings and doings of the able but capricious statesman who for a few years held in his hands the fate of the civilized world ; the last reports from the frontier, from the Rhine, from the Danube, from the Euphrates ; the state and prospects of trade in the Eastern Mediterranean ; the yield of the taxes in this province or that ; the misconduct of one provincial governor or of another : or matters more local than these—some phase of a long controversy between the soldiers and the civilians, between Roman officials and Jewish mobs, between this and that class of a subject population ; the rivalries, the efforts, the failures, the successes, the follies, the crimes, the misfortunes, of a hundred contemporaries ;—of these things men were thinking when Our Lord was born. The common staple of human

thought and human talk, sometimes embracing the wider interests of the race, more often concentrating itself upon the pettiest details of daily, private, and domestic life, was in those days what it is in these. Aye, on that wonderful night it was so even with the villagers of Bethlehem: they could find no room for the Heavenly Visitor in the village hostelry;³ they little heeded the manger grotto outside, where He, the Infinite in human Form, was laid along with the ox and the ass. Truly, then the Kingdom of God came "not with observation."

Nor was it otherwise when some years later this Kingdom came, proclaimed by His own Divine lips, as the beautiful vision of a new life and a new world, and taking possession by gentle but resistless persuasion of the hearts and imaginations of the peasants of Galilee. No observer noted the steps of its approach, or the steps by which it succeeded. It passed like a secret contagion from soul to soul; one brother brought another; this disciple engaged, seemingly without effort, the sympathies of that; villages, districts, populations were won, they hardly knew why or how, by an invisible charm, which opened before their eyes the vision of a higher and a brighter life, and whispered that it was attainable. Such was our Lord's presence in Galilee. There were no doubt a few decisive words; some acts, too, which awed the multitudes into wonder and gratitude; but on the whole, it was a profound stirring of the thoughts and

³ St. Luke ii. 7.

hearts of men, yet without anything to challenge the notice of the world. It caused as yet little anxiety to the official chiefs of the Jewish religion in Jerusalem: it won even less notice from the high political and military authorities, than would be commanded in London to-day by some new fanaticism among the Zulus. Yet there it was, the Kingdom of God upon earth;—truly it had come, and not with observation.

And when He Who was the centre and sun of this movement, Jesus our Lord, had been crucified, and had risen, and had ascended into the heavens, and had, by the labours of His apostles, fully organized and founded the earthly portion of this Kingdom as His own Catholic Church, and had sped it on its course through the centuries, it still, for many a year, continued to illustrate this its early and Divine characteristic: it came, again and again, to claim new subjects from among men, but “not with observation.” It spread from one place to another, from one race or nation to another, from one class or profession to another; it made the intercourse of friends, and the activities of trade, and the discussions of the learned, and the currents of political life, in their various ways its messengers; it appeared, no one knew exactly when, or how, in the camp, in the school, in the court, in the senate; it was at once select and popular, rough and refined—appealing to the heart and the imagination, but also taking captive the understanding and subduing the will; it could whisper a word of

counsel and guidance to the studious and the thoughtful, as well as a word of warning to the sinful and the indifferent, and a word of sympathy to the suffering and the poor.

A question has often been asked, especially in modern days, the difficulty in answering which illustrates the point on which I am insisting. When and by what means did the Faith of Christ first reach the city of Rome? It might have been thought beforehand that the answer must be at once forthcoming; that, whatever else was obscure, there could be no difficulty in naming the agency by which the capital of the ancient world received the Faith which was to have such a momentous influence on its later history. Yet, as a matter of fact, the question does admit of no certain reply. There are indeed popular answers ready to hand; but they will not bear investigation. Did that great apostle whose name has in later ages been claimed by Rome as its especial monopoly, as its crowning glory—did St. Peter introduce Christianity into Rome? The supposition is untenable, for one especial reason among others; St. Peter could not have been at Rome when St. Paul, some ten years before their common martyrdom, wrote his Epistle to the Romans, in which St. Peter is never once even remotely alluded to. St. Paul could not have so violated his own rule of not building on another man's foundation,⁴ as to write an authoritative letter to the Roman Church

⁴ Rom. xv. 20.

without once acknowledging his obligations or his duties to an apostle who had preceded him; and St. Peter's visit to Rome is, in all probability, to be placed at a later date, not more than two or three years before his death. Was St. Paul then the author of Roman Christianity? was he the apostle who founded the Roman Church? This again is impossible: St. Paul wrote to the Roman Church as a church already numerous and flourishing, but which he had never yet had time to visit.⁵ The names which are most nearly associated with the earliest church in Rome are those of the private undistinguished Christians Aquila and Priscilla;⁶ and yet there is no evidence which goes to show that they actually introduced the Faith into the city of the Cæsars. In fact the answer to this question is lost in the haze of the earliest Christian history: it could only be given accurately, where it is recorded, in the world above. Who they were, by whose lips, Christ our Lord was first named in the capital of the empire, whether Christians flying from Jerusalem after the death of St. Stephen, or baptized proselytes returning to their native synagogue on the morrow of Pentecost, we know not; we never shall know in this life. There is here abundant room for imaginative conjecture; and, in the absence of real knowledge, we may observe how remarkably the origin of the Roman Church itself illustrates the principle laid down by our Lord, that the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

⁵ Rom. i. 10, 13; xv. 24.

⁶ Rom. xvi. 3; Acts xviii. 2, 18.

Contrast this characteristic of Christ's Kingdom with what we find elsewhere. No one would say that the religion of Mahomet made its way in the world without observation. It burst upon civilization as the war-cry of an invading host; it was dictated at the point of the scimitar to conquered populations, as the alternative to ruin or to death. The history of its propagation throughout the eastern world was written in characters of blood and fire; the frontier of its triumphs was precisely determined by the successes of its warriors; and in these last centuries it has receded in a degree exactly corresponding to the progressive collapse of the barbarous forces to which it was indebted for its earlier expansion.

The Kingdom of God came without observation, and we have seen that when it had come it could not but be, in some sense, observed; since it was to consist of believing men; since it was to be, as St. Paul says, one body as well as one spirit;⁷ since as an institution, with public officers and territorial arrangements of its own, it so far entered into the sphere of sense. But a time came when, we must sorrowfully admit, our Lord's words no longer served to describe the manner in which efforts were always made to promote the advance of His Kingdom. Christians were truer to Him when they prayed and suffered in the catacombs, than when, after Constantine's conversion, they had learned to wait as courtiers in

⁷ Eph. iv. 4.

the antechambers of the Cæsars. And when the Roman Empire fell, and amidst the general collapse of the old society the Church remained as a solitary institution, standing erect in the midst of a world of ruins, it followed that her chief pastors became, in the natural course and by the pressure of events, great temporal princes, ruling the bodies as well as the souls of men; and that her bishops took their seats in earthly legislatures; and that her public action commingled with that of the powers of this world, and attracted at least an equal share of human observation. And then even good Christian men brought themselves to think that the Kingdom of God could somehow be made to come, not merely with great "observation," but by the mere manipulation of physical force; that it would come in the wake of conquering armies, or at the dictates of earthly magistrates, or in obedience to the sword, not of the Spirit, but of the soldier or the policeman. Now this gigantic and degrading misconception^s was undoubtedly,

^s "Jesus Himself expressly declared that His 'Kingdom is not of this world;' assigning as a natural consequence and proof of this, that His servants did not fight to save Him from being delivered to the Jews. St. John xviii. 36. He did not evidently intend to imply that He had no Kingdom *in* this world, and that His dominion existed only in reference to the glorified Saints and Angels in heaven; for in saying that His *servants* did not fight for Him, He implied that He *had* servants on earth, who of course were, and might be called by an equivalent expression (inasmuch as He proclaimed His own regal dignity) *subjects* of His Kingdom. Nor did He mean, as some well-intentioned Christians have imagined, to prohibit self-defence against robbers or hostile invaders; but that He forbade His

in its origin, due to a particular kind of intimacy between the Divine Kingdom and the powers of this world; an intimacy of such a sort and character, that the methods for extending and guarding an earthly empire seemed to be immediately applicable to the work of protecting and enlarging the Kingdom of God. The days of that old intimacy are, it would seem, passing away all over Christendom. And if when we look back on them, we must, as Christians, regret the loss of that public honour which was thus assigned by our forefathers to religion among the lesser concerns of life; still, we may reflect that the true strength of Christianity lies, not in the outward symbols of its empire, but in the reality of its empire over hearts and wills; that the Kingdom of God which “cometh not with observation” does not really need contrivances for causing it to be “observed;” and that a possible future of the Church, which may seem, to worldly eyes, sheer poverty and failure, may yet contain within

followers to fight *for Him*; to support by force the cause of His Kingdom; to have recourse to arms for the maintenance of His authority, and the defence of His religion. ‘If My Kingdom,’ said He, ‘were of this world then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My Kingdom not from hence.’ It is plain, therefore, that the Kingdom which He claimed, and in which He gave authority under Himself to His Apostles, saying, ‘I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me,’ was a Kingdom existing indeed in this world, but not *of* this world,—sanctioned by the rewards and punishments of a future state,—maintained by no secular means of coercion,—neither superseding nor combined with, nor in any way interfering with civil government.”—“Letters on the Church,” by an Episcopalian. London. 1826. Letter 1, p. 5. This volume is attributed to Archbishop Whately.

itself the springs of a renovating moral force—a force intense and concentrated—whereby to win back to the fresh faith and love of early ages the worn-out or decaying energies of a jaded and heart-sick world.

III.

As with the Church so with the soul, the law holds good, that “the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.”

When are the first germs of the new life deposited? It is when in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the water of baptism is poured on an infant brow. This is what St. Paul calls “the washing of regeneration;”⁹ this is what our Lord had Himself described as being “born of water and of the Spirit.”¹ We see nothing that is not perfectly ordinary and commonplace; a clergyman, a font, the infant, the parents, the godparents, the few surrounding worshippers. But true Christian faith knows that He is there, Who was crucified in weakness and Who reigns in power; present by the agency of His Divine Spirit, to turn what but for Him would be an empty and useless form, into a solemn act of momentous import, which is registered above; to make the child, who can offer no resistance such as an adult might offer to the influences of grace, then and there a “member of Christ, a child of

⁹ Tit. iii. 5.

¹ St John iii. 5.

God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Truly, at a christening, the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

And if, in after-years, the precious grace thus given is, as it well may be, sinned away and lost, and nothing but the stamp or socket of the Divine gift remains, without its informing spiritual and vital power, then another change is necessary, which we call conversion. And what is conversion? Is it always a something that can be appraised and registered, as having happened at some exact hour of the clock; as having been attended by such and such recognized symptoms; as announced to bystanders in these or those conventional or indispensable ejaculations; as achieved among certain invariable and easily described experiences? Assuredly not. A conversion may have its vivid and memorable occasion, its striking and visible incidents; a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, may at midday, during a country-ride, flash upon the soul of Saul of Tarsus; a verse of Scripture, suddenly illuminated with new, and unsuspected, and constraining meaning, may give a totally new direction to the will and genius of Augustine. But in truth the types of the process of conversion are just as various as are the souls of men; the one thing that does not vary, since it is the essence of what takes place, is a change—a deep and vital change,—in the direction of the will. Conversion is the substitution of God's Will as the end and aim of life, for all other aims and ends whatever; and thus, human

nature being what it is, conversion is as a rule a “turning from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that” a man may “receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified through faith that is in” Christ.² And this change itself most assuredly cometh not with observation. The after-effects indeed appear; the generousities of self-sacrifice; the unity of purpose which gives meaning and solemnity and force to life; the proper fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, each in such measure as befits the requirements of natural character. Certainly when the Divine Kingdom has come into a soul, the result may often be traced by sure marks of its presence; but in this case too, the Kingdom of God *cometh*, at least as a rule, not with observation.

And so it is with all the more solemn and precious incidents of the life of the spirit of man. They do not court observation, they elude and shrink from it. Discussion, publicity, still more recognition and applause, are nothing less than death to them. It is only a shallow stream which catches the ear by its noisy ripples, as it forces its way over the pebbles in its bed: deep waters run still. Of the greatest lives that are lived, little or nothing is often heard at the time; if, indeed, much is ever heard in this world. The ruling motives in a good Christian, constantly, because instinctively, acted on, are never referred to; the most solemn voices that

² Acts xxvi. 18.

I.] *What will happen in death and judgment?* 19

reach the soul are oftenest heard, not in the excitement of a vast crowd gathered in a lighted church, but in the loneliness of sorrow, or in the stillness of the midnight hour, when we feel that God is about our bed, and spying out all our ways; or at an early Communion, when the soul hastens to lay its best and freshest efforts of thought and will, unimpaired, untainted, by the busy cares and intercourse of a working day, at the feet of its adored Redeemer. In these and like matters it is true that the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

Will it ever be thus? In its full solemnity and import the Kingdom of God will come to every man as never before, at death and in Judgment. It will be brought home to each of us then; it will be inflicted upon our earthbound tempers, upon our palsied wills, upon our dull and reluctant senses, with an importunity from which there can be no escape. Even then, too, its approaches may be gradual and unperceived. Already, here or there, death may be preparing his stealthy march when the seeds of organic disease are sown in some constitution of proverbial soundness and strength. And if, as we heard in to-day's³ Gospel, the Last and Awful Judgment will be heralded by signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth by distress of nations with perplexity, the meaning and import of these tokens of the coming of the Son of Man may nevertheless escape all who are not expecting Him: in spiritual things

³ 2nd Sunday in Advent.

“the fig-tree, and all the trees,” may “shoot forth” without our “seeing and knowing of our own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.”⁴ But when we are in the act of dying, and see before us the manifested Judge, the Kingdom of God will be borne in upon the spirit irresistibly, in all its blessedness or in all its awe. “Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.”⁵ God grant that we may take to heart the solemn words of Christ our Lord; certain that, if at this moment there is no token of His coming upon which observation can certainly fix, yet that the long train of preparations is ever hastening forward in the unseen world, until, at the predestined moment, as a thief in the night, as a lightning flash across the heavens, He comes to Judgment.

⁴ St. Luke xxi. 29, 30.

⁵ Rev. i. 7.

SERMON II.

The Attractibeness of the Saints.

“Time’s years are many, Eternity one,
And one is the Infinite ;
The chosen are few, few the deeds well done,
For scantness is still Heaven’s might.”

Lyra Apostolica.

SERMON II.

The Attractiveness of the Saints.

“What went ye out into the wilderness to see?”—ST. MATT. xi. 7.

THIS question was put to a large assemblage of His countrymen by our Lord, on an occasion of importance. He had just welcomed, and replied to, an embassy which, as we may presume to think, moved His human sympathies very deeply. John the Baptist, whose baptism Jesus had Himself received in the waters of the Jordan; John the Baptist, who had so preached repentance as to be indeed “the Prophet of the Highest, going before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways;”¹ John the Baptist was in prison. He had dared to tell a plain but unwelcome truth to a wicked king; and this king had acted as powerful vice generally does act when it is confronted by inconvenient and defenceless virtue. Herod Antipas, the capricious, tyrannical, unscrupulous, and sensual, but weak prince, who, under the title of tetrarch, ruled the country beyond the Jordan, and the northern districts of Palestine, had actually married the daughter of a neighbouring Arab chief called Aretas. But this did not

¹ St. Luke i. 76.

prevent him from making overtures of marriage to Herodias, the wife of his own half-brother, Herod Philip ; and these proposals were favourably received. With fearless simplicity the Baptist pointed out to the king the immoral character of his proceeding ; and Herod, who would have killed John had it been politic to do so, shut him up for the present in the gloomy fortress of Machœrus, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea.² It was from this prison that the Baptist despatched the embassy to Jesus. The fame of the miracles of Jesus in Galilee had reached the ears of the imprisoned Prophet, and of the few followers who still clung to him with an affectionate devotion that does them honour. It would seem probable that John had in vain endeavoured to persuade these faithful friends that if they would be true to him they must become disciples of Jesus ; that his own ministry was only meant to lead men to Jesus ; and that the miracles of which they heard so much ought to satisfy them that Jesus was the Messiah of Jewish prophecy. The followers of John still hesitated, and then the Baptist determined to send two of them to Jesus, that they might ask Him whether He was what John proclaimed Him to be, and might see and hear for themselves. They put their question to our Lord as if it was a message from their master ; and our Lord answered them accordingly. He bade them go and tell John the story of their

² The reader will remember the interesting account of this fortress in Dr. Tristram's "Land of Moab."

Galilean experiences ; how the vivid imagery of Isaiah had been translated before their eyes into the world of fact ; how the blind received their sight, and the lame walked, and lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard, and the dead were raised up, and, above all, the poor had the good news from heaven preached unto them.³ And then, as the disciples turned away, well satisfied, we may be sure, to carry back this message to their beloved master, Jesus turned to the multitude of bystanders with a question of His own ; a question which He Himself went on to answer. "As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see?"

I.

What, we may reverently ask, was our Lord's motive in asking this question, then and there ?

It is plain, from His own answer to it, that He asked it in order first to repair and then to sustain the honour in which John the Baptist had been held by the Jewish people.

Recent events would have tended, naturally enough, to diminish that honour. First of all, there was the broad fact ; John was in prison. The days were when he had had at his command the love and admiration of an entire

³ St. Matt xi. 5 : Isa. xxix. 18.

nation. Now his work was closed; it was closed seemingly by the mere will and fiat of a weak and immoral king. Depend upon it the majority of men thought that the sun of the Prophet of the Desert had set, or was setting, in humiliation and in ruin. In their minds' eye they traced over the gate of the fortress of Machærus the fatal motto "He has failed." This would have been the popular impression of the moment. And our Lord Jesus Christ knew the people, as none has ever known it before or since. He knew that the people, if generous in its judgments, is also sometimes precipitate; that it is misled by mere appearances; that success often, though not always, passes with it as a certificate of merit; and that failure, if not always yet often, is accounted a proof of moral wrong. John the Baptist was a prisoner; that was the fact before them. And however honourable to himself might be the reason for which he was imprisoned, the fact was likely, in the long-run, to outweigh the reason, and to leave an imprint of depreciation on his name and character in the coming times.

Besides this, in sending to ask whether Jesus was the expected Messiah, John, in his noble self-forgetfulness, had sacrificed his own credit for the sake of his disciples. That they might learn the better, he was willing to seem as one who had parted with the secret of inspiration. For years he had been accounted the great teacher and prophet, whose utterances—confident, direct, vehement—had awed multitudes into a change of life. Now, it might

he thought, the light and strength of heaven had deserted him ; he was but as one of the many whom he had taught and led. The great teacher, charged with an inspired message to the world, seemed to have become only an inquirer, hesitating before a difficulty. And this apparent change of attitude on the part of John towards religious truth, could not but have affected the imagination of the people. They may well have supposed—as modern critics have supposed, with less reason, since their day—that the gloomy solitude of the prison had done its work upon that noble soul ; that his faith in his mission as the Precursor had given way ; and that the dreadful thought that his life had been devoted to one vast mistake, had settled down upon him with all the gloom of a misgiving that ushers in the night of an absolute despair.

It was therefore in order to counteract this unworthy and depreciatory estimate of His great servant ; to redress the balance of one-sided opinion ; to rehabilitate St. John in the judgment of the new generation that was coming to the front, that our Lord desired His hearers to turn their thoughts back to the time of the great popularity and ascendancy of the Baptist. For the days had been when there went out to sit at the feet of the Prophet of the Wilderness “all Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”⁴ Some of our Lord’s hearers had swollen the ranks of these multi-

⁴ St. Matt. iii. 5.

tudes; and our Lord bade them ask themselves why it was that they had left their homes? Where was the reasonableness of doing so? What was the governing attraction? "What went ye out into the wilderness to see?"

II.

Our Lord's words do, in fact, raise a very large and interesting question, which we may well consider this afternoon, namely, what it is in human character or life that exerts the most powerful attraction over the hearts of men.

Is it what we generally call amiability? the instinct or habit which makes itself agreeable to everybody; which never opposes, never contradicts, never even holds its own, when to do so would cause a momentary sense of discomfort? Is it, as our Lord puts it, "a reed shaken with the wind?" a character that bends or that trembles at the first expression of adverse opinion; at a phrase in a speech, or at a phrase in a newspaper? Is this the character that wins the human heart? Are we really won by men who, in intercourse with their fellows, can see one, and one only, golden rule of conduct, that of "making things easy," and so of voting down principle whenever it becomes unwelcome or exacting? There are many people to be met with who evidently take this view of life in perfect good faith. They have

no principles, or none which they care to defend or make sacrifices for; their one object is to avoid that kind of discomfort which arises from a sense of social collision. So they go about the world bowing and smiling their unmeaning compliments to all the incompatibilities whom they meet on their way; and whatever else may be said of them, assuredly this is deservedly said of them, that they are very amiable people. Undoubtedly such persons are easier to get on with than those who look upon the society of their fellow-men as affording them the same sort of opportunity for distinction which a sea captain discovers in the neighbourhood of a hostile fleet. They are entitled, beyond doubt, to this negative praise: but the question is whether they exert any attraction on our hearts. And that question assuredly can only be answered in one way.

For what is it that we seek, all of us, in those whom we really love and respect? If we know anything about ourselves, we know this; that we are, all of us at times, weak, unstable, swayed hither and thither by gusts of feeling or opinion, by vacillations of which, in our higher and better moments, we are ashamed. And therefore, in our Lord's words, "we do not go out into the wilderness to see a reed shaken with the wind." We are most of us too familiar with that spectacle at home to make any efforts whatever to study it elsewhere. That which really draws us to itself is the sight of a man who knows the value of truth, and who is strong in knowing it;

strong enough to be perfectly courteous to its opponents, and to be withal entirely unyielding; strong enough to resist the delicate blandishments as well as the calculated ferocities of error and of vice: strong enough to feel that he can afford to be, and is bound to be, considerate and tender; and so, by this exhibition of a strength in which you and I know ourselves to be deficient, drawing us to lean on him in quest of a support which we do not find in ourselves. No; most assuredly, if St. John the Baptist had been the man to make himself agreeable, under all circumstances, to a king like Herod Antipas, the multitudes would never have troubled themselves to go out into the wilderness to see him.

Are we then generally attracted by the attributes of high station and position? John the Baptist was a man of good birth. But was it "a man clothed in soft raiment," who had drawn the Jewish multitudes from their homes into the desert, at the time referred to by our Lord?

There can be no question as to the attractive power which high station, and the circumstances that encompass it, exert over the minds of multitudes of men. Few persons are really insensible to this influence; and, generally speaking, those men are least of all insensible to it, who go out of their way ostentatiously to disclaim it. Nor is such an influence to be accounted for by supposing that the great and powerful are only sought after for the sake of what can be got out of them. This vulgar explanation

of their influence goes a very short way towards accounting for the facts; since we find that royalty in all ages and countries commands the homage of multitudes who never can expect to add one penny to their resources from the bounty of a Sovereign. And in truth the sentiment in question appeals not to the commercial instinct of making money and of getting on, but to a disinterested sense and conception of all that is involved in a great position. A great position, as we call it, is the product of some form of human enterprise or virtue in bygone days; it represents the valour, or the wisdom, or at least the perseverance of some among those whom we call the dead; it has accumulated with the lapse of years a vast assortment of associations, each one of which adds to it some new claim upon the popular feeling; it has been consecrated, we may dare to say, at least in some sense, by the protecting and upholding hand of God; and so it comes down to us, as a royal dynasty, or as a great family, enriched with a thousand subtle but imperious recommendations. And thus as we look on the "man clothed in soft raiment," we ungrudgingly yield to him at least a corner of our hearts.

But; does he really take possession of us? Surely not. His life may be a contradiction to all the ideal expectations that are raised by his rank. And, when this is not the case, reflection here, as in other matters, if not entirely undoing the work of imagination, at least obliges us to keep it in check. After all, what we seek

in our most serious moments is not the position, but the man; not the "soft raiment," but the mind and heart and will that underlie it. The position is not the real man: it is merely a decoration altogether outside him. And when we have stripped it off, and have looked at what lies beneath, we find perhaps what we find elsewhere, a timid, forlorn soul, shivering at the Justice and the Magnificence of God, and as little able as ourselves to give the sort of satisfaction that is most constantly needed by the heart and will of a sinful fellow-creature.

No, if we leave our ordinary occupations, and go out into the unfrequented haunts of life, it is not to see a man clothed in soft raiment. Such persons, as our Lord says, are found elsewhere: they "live in king's houses;" they have their own range of influence and consideration, but it does not include the recesses of the heart.

Is it, then, mental power which most powerfully attracts us? Is it some great endowment that at once places a human mind in a rank high above its fellows; whether it be strength of reason, or wealth of imagination, or retentiveness of memory, or subtlety and delicacy of intellectual touch? Certainly, we see that many a man bows down to intellect who would shrink from the idea that he could care for station or for wealth. Intellect, he says, is part of the man himself, and is not, like station or wealth, a mere adjunct, contributing nothing to make him what he really is; intellect is the most conspicuous ingredient in the composition of the man; intellect above

all things is power, sometimes it is power of the highest order, wielding decisive influence in human affairs. Intellect then may well prove a commanding attraction; and the gift of prophecy, although spiritually conferred, was in its exercise an intellectual gift, which charmed and swayed the minds of men by the play of thought which was involved in its expression. And this is why our Lord asked His hearers whether they went out into the wilderness to see the popular prophet, as if in quest of a form of mental enjoyment.

Intellect, no doubt, is attractive, but the attraction is wanting both in power and in universality. It is not a universal attraction; since to do justice to intellect there must be mind enough to take stock of what it is and of what it achieves; and most of us, you and I, make no pretension to be intellectual in this sense. And it is not a very powerful attraction: there are large regions of our nature, and those often the most interesting, which it does not remotely touch. How often do we see intellect triumphantly silencing adverse argument, yet quite unable to produce conviction; the truth being that, although no answer seems to be forthcoming, something whispers that there is an answer, if it could only at the moment be produced. Such a whisper proceeds from a district of the soul for which mere intellect has made, and can make, no provision whatever. This district is spirit; just as real a department of the soul's life as is that in which intellect lives and works: just as real, but a far

higher one. There were simple Christians who had no chance in conversation with a master of profane repartee like Voltaire; but then his brilliant sarcasms left them where they were; an ostentatiously godless logic does not even touch that region of spiritual instinct in which, as in a native atmosphere, faith and love flourish and grow.

The truth is, that intellect often forfeits its legitimate power through being divorced from goodness. There is no necessary connexion between goodness and the very highest intellectual gifts. Balaam is an instance of lofty prophetic insight, joined to a fatal obliquity or weakness of moral character; he died fighting against the enemies of the truth which he had defended and proclaimed.⁵ Bacon, the father of the inductive philosophy, is a sample of the highest scientific intellect; and yet, for the credit of intellect, we almost wish that he could have been less wise than he was if he could not have been less mean.

And, not to insist on other instances, what a conspicuous example of this fact is afforded by the great writer, who more than any other man has formed the modern mind of Germany. All the world knows that Goethe's works sparkle with an originality that is all his own; and yet it is difficult to name a book that leaves us with a more melancholy impression of the tranquil and deliberate selfishness of a human character than Goethe's Autobiography. Goethe delights us while he is educating

⁵ Numb. xxxi. 8.

taste, while he is stimulating and refining thought, while the heart is out of the way, and all that is highest and deepest in life is not immediately in question. But, in times of real seriousness or real sorrow, Goethe would be intolerable: mere polish or acuteness are lost upon the finest faculties of the soul of man. Goethe differs conspicuously from our own Shakespeare, with whom intellect is constantly in close alliance with higher qualities; and whose majestic language stutters, once and again, as he feels himself on the confines of a higher world, as if in instinctive deference to a Truth, or to a Beauty, Which is beyond the compass of human thought to reach.

But, in all probability, there is no created⁶ intellect so acute, so trained, so endowed with all the apparatus of knowledge, so vast in its capacity, and withal so intense in its power of concentrated application, as that of the Evil and apostate Spirit, the king of the children of pride. For many thousand years he has been observing, inferring, correcting his observations and his inferences, accumulating knowledge in a vast field of experience, which is only not infinite, profiting by man's wisdom and by man's success, as well as by man's failures and his folly, and thus becoming by a process of unarrested growth, a being of mental powers, to which there can be no parallel among the sons of men. And yet when we think of his relation to the All-holy and Loving God, of his will stiffened by ancient persistence into determined and

⁶ The Intellect in Our Lord's Human Soul, is, of course, not in question.

irrevocable opposition to goodness, of the whole volume of desire in his nature changed from love into a malignant hatred, we see how his consummate intellectual endowments only enhance our reasons for utterly shrinking from his dreadful approach. No ! intellect is not of itself attractive, at least in the long-run ; and if the multitudes went out into the wilderness to see the last of the prophets, it was because, if a prophet, he was more than a prophet ; because there was that about him which threw even his great prophetic endowments into shadow, while it drew to him the inmost hearts of men.

III.

“More than a prophet” ! What was it—this something which transcended the highest gifts, and which lured the Jewish multitudes into the wilderness to the feet of the Baptist ? Was it the report of his supernatural birth ? was it the spectacle of his hard, ascetic life ? was it the firmness of his resolve ? the simple majesty of a nature that was conscious of a single aim, and indifferent to all besides ? These things no doubt had their weight. But beyond them was the feeling which is always inspired by a great religious character, of whose consistency we are well assured, but which we only half understand. It lives and moves before us, evidently in constant communion with God, while shrouding from the public eye

much which our curiosity would fain explore. Of this reserve of spiritual power in St. John, his hermit life in the desert, his wild food, his dress of camel's hair, were aptly suggestive; they showed that this side of existence was repressed for the sake of the other, and that to John the other was incomparably the vaster and more real. Without analyzing their feelings, these multitudes felt that in coming near to John the Baptist they were like travellers who stand at the base of a mountain which buries its summit in the clouds: they knew that a man of no common mould was there, and that he was worth understanding, if he could only be understood. This reserve is inevitable in the case of every great servant of God, and it goes to account for his attractive force. We too, moral pigmies as we are, long to catch a glimpse of that greater world in which God's spiritual aristocracy lives and works; we listen for the distant echo of its secrets; we are irresistibly drawn to claim such fellowship with it as we can, if only because it touches a chord in our souls which reminds us that we too have been created for the Infinite Being, and have before us, if we will, a destiny of boundless magnificence.

It was this quality in St. John which our Lord desired to suggest to the minds of those who listened. For if they did understand it, there would be no danger of their thinking that John was a prophet who had been discredited by the cessation of his public utterances or by his imprisonment. If John was more than a prophet,

it mattered little, from this point of view, whether he prophesied or not. If his body was detained by the bars and bolts of the royal prison-house, those bolts and bars could not confine the activities or narrow the range of his majestic soul. They could but illustrate the vulgar impotence of the world of sense when it provokes a conflict with the sublime aspirations and convictions of the world of spirit. It was this quality in St. John which explained his high office as our Lord's Precursor. "Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet; for this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, that he may prepare Thy way before Thee."

In truth, such a character as St. John's raised expectations which it could not satisfy. It pointed upwards to the Infinite and the Perfect: but as men gazed into the vast azure, all became vague and indistinct, and the soul fell back upon the dull concrete realities of everyday existence. If the work of John was to be completed and sustained, another Presence was needed; a Presence so real and certain, and withal so unassailable in Its majestic beauty that in It the human heart would find that even its highest hopes were not disappointed.

It is this quality which to the end of time explains the attractive power of churches and of men. Churches do not draw us into communion with them when they ostentatiously profess to have no positive doctrines, and to be only anxious to secure adherents; they do not draw us by their intimate relations with powerful empires, or by

the high station of their chief ministers, or even by the intellectual endowments of their most distinguished representatives. The human soul seeks in the Church of God something more than a reed shaken with the wind; something more than a man clothed in soft raiment; even something more than an intellectually gifted prophet. It seeks that felt but indescribable touch of a higher world which lifts it above the trivialities of this: it seeks a temple, the threshold of which it may cross, but whose sanctuary lies within the bosom of the Infinite; it seeks a life, the divine pulsations of which it knows to issue from an invisible Heart; above all, it seeks whatever will lead it most effectually and most intimately to Him—its Lord and God—Who alone can satisfy the deep, mysterious yearnings with which He has Himself endowed it.

And as with churches so with men. It is not the easy-going, the highly-placed, the intellectual who win our hearts. The men who really take us captive are the saintly. They take us out of ourselves: they draw us into the wilderness; we follow them into some solitude of thought where the common associations of life are not. And then, in silence it may be but by their example, they bid us look upwards, if we would understand what they are; they bid us look upwards, beyond themselves, to the strength and secret of their life, to Jesus Christ, God and Man, Crucified, Risen, Ascended, Interceding. Oh! divine prerogative thus to prepare the way of the Lord!

Oh ! happiness, undeserved and unspeakable, thus to be drawn to Him, though it be by influences which we only half understand ourselves, and which the world, if it does not always persecute, will never understand, until all is made clear in the presence of the Eternal Judge !

SERMON III.

The Law and the Gospel.

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
 Lead thou me on !
The night is dark, and I am far from home,—
 Lead thou me on !”

Lyra Apostolica.

SERMON III.

The Law and the Gospel.

“Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”—GAL. iii. 24.

ON the Sunday next before Christmas Day we cannot do wrong in thinking about some one of the agents or influences which prepared the world for Our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole people and history of Israel was, in a large sense, a preparation for Him: He was its climax, its finished product; and when He had appeared, Israel had done its real work in the world. Israel prepared the world for Christ in many ways. All that was excellent and saintly in its great men was a shadow of some aspect in the character of Him That was to come, as the Flower and Prime of the human family. Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David; the great messengers, who from age to age proclaimed God's truth to Israel; the strong and heroic leaders who brought Israel back from the darkness and the chains of Babylon;—these were all, in their various ways, types of the Redeemer. But Israel made ready His path of suffering and victory, by two means beyond all others.

First, Israel was the people of prophecy. And pro-

phesy, among many other achievements, achieved this;—it “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”¹ It told the world all about Him before He came; and men might have read, if they would, in the pages of the prophets, what they read afterwards, expressed in other terms, in the pages of the apostles and evangelists. In the earlier as in the later literature are proclaimed Christ’s pre-existent life, His birth of a Virgin mother, the character and effects of His ministry, His profound humiliation and agonizing death, His triumph and His glory. Over all the sacred books of Israel He Himself has traced the motto, “They are they which testify of Me.”²

But Israel was also the people of the Law. The legislation of Sinai was one of seven distinctive glories, which, in a passage of crucial importance,³ St. Paul ascribes to Israel. And the Law, thus given, was like prophecy in this;—it also was meant to lead to Christ; it “was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

I.

“Law” is one of the group of words round which the thought of St. Paul constantly moves, and he uses it in more senses than one. Here he means by it generally

¹ 1 St. Peter i. 11.

² St. John v. 39.

³ Rom. ix. 1—5.

the five books of Moses, to which the Jews commonly gave the name ; and, more particularly, he means those parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, in which are contained the various rules which God gave to Moses, for the moral, social, political, and religious or ceremonial conduct of the people of Israel. This was "the Law" in which, as St. Paul said, the Jew made his boast ;⁴ he was proud to belong to the race which had received it. This was the Law, the possession of which made Israel a peculiar people, marking it off by a deep-cut line of separation from all the other nations of the world.⁵ This was the Law which it was the business of every Israelite to obey. In obeying it he would become just,⁶ that is, such as he ought to be when measured by a Divine standard ; and this legal righteousness it was the object and the glory of his life to acquire, if he could, in the greatest perfection possible.

Of this Law, then, St. Paul says bluntly, that its main purpose was not present but prospective. It was not so much to be prized for what it could give as for the sake of that to which it was to lead. It was really like those slaves who were kept in well-to-do households in the ancient world, first in order to teach the children of their master roughly, or as well as they could, and afterwards to lead them down day by day to the house of the philosopher, at whose hands they would receive real instruction. And this was the business of the Law ; it did whatever it

⁴ Rom. ii. 23.⁵ Deut. iv. 8.⁶ Deut. vi. 25.

could do for the Jews as an elementary instructor, and then it had to take them by the hand and guide them to the school of Jesus Christ; to that great Institute which He, the true Light of the World, had opened, that He might give in it the best and highest education to all the races of mankind.

St. Paul had a very strong reason for insisting on this aspect of the Law in his Letter to the Galatian churches. These churches had quite recently been visited by certain teachers, who made free and unwarrantable use of the names of the great apostles St. Peter and St. James. By this means they tried to persuade the Galatians that the Christian Church had not abandoned the ceremonial part of the Jewish Law; that since it was practised, more or less, by the Christians of the Church of Jerusalem, it was binding upon converts from heathenism all the world over; and that if the Galatians meant to be genuine Christians, and not merely half-Christians, they must lose no time in thus complying with the requirements of the perfect Christian life. To begin with, as they were converts from heathenism, they must forthwith be circumcised. Thus, when St. Paul wrote, the Galatians, though they were already baptized into Christ, and had put on Christ,⁷ were actually busying themselves about being circumcised. It was too much for the Apostle. He could keep no terms with these reactionary Christians. He exclaimed indignantly, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should

⁷ Gal. iii. 27.

not obey the truth?"^s "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."⁹

But here, as always, St. Paul rests particular directions upon broad and general truths. Why was circumcision so entirely out of the question for baptized Christians? Because it was the shadow of the substance which they already enjoyed; because the Law which prescribed it had done its true work in the world and in history; because the Law was meant to lead men to Christ, that they might at His hands, secure a real righteousness. And Christ had come; He had been incarnate and crucified; He had risen and had ascended into heaven. The law had left mankind at the door of the School of Christ; where then was the sense of leaving the feet of the Great Instructor, to rejoin the slave who had only shown the way to Him?¹

II.

Now here the question arises, *How did the Law lead men to Christ?*

The Law led men to Christ first of all by foreshadowing Him. This was true especially of the ceremonial part of it, which St. Paul had immediately in view when he wrote to the Galatians, although the principle which he lays down applies to the whole Law. Now the ceremonies of

^s Gal. iii. 1.

⁹ Gal. v. 2.

¹ Gal. iii. 25.

divine service which were prescribed to Israel in the Law were not ceremonies with no end beyond themselves. It indeed may be doubted whether there are any purely meaningless ceremonies, whether civil or religious; since, human nature being what it is, a ceremony is dropped as soon as it ceases to mean something, and, while it lasts, it is valued because it does mean something whether present, or past, or future. The ceremonies of the Jewish worship, prescribed by such high authority, and in themselves so detailed and elaborate, were not for nothing; and they meant more than the general duty of offering to God praise and sacrifice, since this object might have been set forth by much simpler rites. What, for instance, was the full meaning of the solemn and touching observance of the Jewish Day of Atonement? Many a Jew must have asked himself the question; some Rabbis nearly guessed the answer; but every Christian knows what the answer is, when he has read the Epistle to the Hebrews. We know that what passed in the old earthly sanctuary was from first to last a shadow of the majestic self-oblation of the true High Priest of Christendom, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour;² that every action in the ancient service has its counterpart in His self-presentation as the Crucified before the Majesty of the Father;³ that while it was impossible that the "blood of bulls and goats should take away sin,"⁴ it is equally certain that we Christians are sanctified by "the offering of the Body

² Heb. ix. 11, 12.³ Heb. viii. 5; ix. 23.⁴ Heb. x. 4.

of Jesus Christ once for all,"⁵ and that "by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified."⁶

It may be urged with justice that this aspect of the ceremonial law is plain enough to us, who look back on it all, with the New Testament in our hands; but that it can hardly have been plain to the Israelites themselves. We have the key to the meaning of their Ritual: they knew little more than that their Ritual meant something that awaited them in the Providence of God; that it was a "shadow of good things to come."⁷ But thus much at least they did know, and this knowledge kept them on the look-out for what might be in store for them; each ceremony was felt to have a meaning beyond the time then present, and so it fostered an expectant habit of mind;⁸ and as the ages passed, expectations, thus created, converged more and more towards a coming Messiah, and in a subordinate but real way the ceremonial law did its part in leading the nation down to the School of Christ.

Secondly, and more effectively, the Law trained men for Christ by creating in man's conscience a sense of want which He alone could relieve. This was the work of the moral Law; it was the work of every moral precept in the books of Moses, but especially of those most sacred and authoritative precepts which we know as the Ten Commandments. Now as a rule of life the Law was elaborate and exacting; and yet if the righteous-

⁵ Heb. x. 10.⁶ Heb. x. 14.⁷ Heb. x. 1.⁸ Heb. ix. 9, 10.

ness which it was to confer was to be secured, nothing less than a complete obedience was necessary. The Law was guarded by these great sayings to which the Christian apostles refer. "The man that doeth these things, shall live by them"⁹ "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them."¹ "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."²

Righteousness, then, under the Law, depended on exact obedience: but what were the probabilities that this would be rendered by man in his unassisted weakness? What was the fact, obvious to all who looked about them and saw what was passing in Jewish society and life? St. Paul prefers to answer this painful question in the inspired language of an earlier age. "It is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."³ And then to obviate the objection that this language was originally used by the Psalmist of the enemies of Israel, St. Paul adds, "We know that whatsoever things the Law saith"—here by law he means the whole of the Old Testament—"it saith to them that

⁹ Rom. x. 5, cf. Lev. xviii. 5.

¹ Gal. iii. 10, cf. Deut. xxvii. 26.

² St. James ii. 10. St. James transfers the maxim to the Christian law of liberty.

³ Rom. iii. 10, 11, cf. Psalm xiv. 1, 2, 3 : liii. 1.

are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”⁴

This was indeed the hard matter of fact, the Law was universally disobeyed. But was it therefore useless? No. Its main purpose was to discover human sin, of which, but for it, man would have been unconscious: “by the Law is the knowledge of sin.”⁵ It was like a torch carried into the dark cellars and crevices of human nature, that it might reveal the foul shapes that lurked there, and might rouse man to long for a righteousness which it could not itself confer. Nay, more, in the process of doing this the Law incidentally aggravated the very evil which it brought to light. The presence of a Divine Rule, which forbade the indulgence of human passions, had the effect of irritating these passions into a self-asserting activity. “I had not known sin but by the Law; for I had not known lust unless the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”⁶ In the absence of the Law the sinful tendency had been inert: “without the Law sin was dead: but when the commandment”—that is, a given precept of the Law—“came, sin revived and I died.”⁷ Not that the Law was answerable for this result. The Law, in itself, was holy and just and good.⁸ The cause lay in the profoundly sinful tendency of fallen human nature;⁹ but the general result was an aggravated sense of shortcoming. So far from furnishing man with a real righteousness: so

⁴ Rom. iii. 19.

⁵ Rom. iii. 20.

⁶ Rom. vii. 7.

⁷ Rom. vii. 8, 9.

⁸ Rom. vii. 12.

⁹ Rom. vii. 14.

far from making him such as he should be, correspondent to the true ideal of his nature, the Law only inflicted on every conscience, that was not fatally benumbed, a depressing conviction that righteousness was, at least in the way of legal obedience, impossible.¹ And this conviction of itself prepared men for a righteousness which should be not the product of human efforts, but a gift from heaven; for a righteousness attained by the adhesion of faith to the perfect moral Being, Jesus Christ, whereby the believer's life becomes incorporate with His, and man becomes such as he should be, or, in other words, is justified by faith.

But, thirdly, the Law led men to Christ by putting them under a discipline which trained them for Him. And this is a point which requires, even more than the preceding, your careful attention.

Look around you, my Brethren, and ask yourselves what is the Divine plan for training, both men and nations? Is it not to begin with rule and to end with principle; to begin with law and to end with faith; to begin with Moses and to end with Christ?

Take the case of a study; say grammar. A boy begins with rules. He learns them by heart without seeing the reasons for them, and he applies them. His one business, first of all, is to follow the rule. By-and-by, he comes to see that the rules of grammar are not arbitrary things, made by the old schoolmasters out of their own heads,

¹ Rom. iii. 20.

but that they could not be other than they are, since they only put into a practical and working shape what he now dimly recognizes as the principles of language. In other words, he ascends from rule to principle; he does not give up rule, but he rests it upon the reason or principle which warrants it; he obeys it, not merely for the sake of obedience, but because, in view of his larger knowledge, he cannot help doing so.²

Or take the case of a nation. In its earlier history, if it is to hold together, it must have a very strict and stern code of laws. All the earlier national codes are of this character: the first object of a nation and of its ruler is to preserve order. During these earlier ages of its history a nation is at school: but a time comes when it reaches manhood. Does it then discard law, and dissolve, through some process of revolution, into anarchy? If it is wise, most assuredly not. It retains law; although probably in a milder form. But it rests law, more and more, upon the public apprehension of the principles which warrant it. The principles of the earlier laws pass into and become identified with the public feeling; public feeling does two-thirds of the work which was done by mere law at earlier stages of the national life. In other words, the nation has passed by a process of inevitable growth from the reign of law to that of principle.

Or take the growth of a man in his apprehension, well,

² I recollect hearing the Rev. John Keble use this and the next illustration in a sermon twenty years ago at Hursley.

of moral truth. What is the rule of development? The child learns from his mother that he must not tell a lie; and that if he is found out, he will be punished. Thus gradually the habit of truthfulness is formed by rule; and by rule enforced by punishment. But a time comes, when the mind of the boy has grown, and when the rule is seen to rest on principle. This principle is that the practical recognition of truth is the very first condition of all true moral life. When this point has been gained, the old rule, "Tell no lies," does not indeed disappear; but, if all goes tolerably well, it is not needed. The man who has passed under the sway of principle does not wish to tell a lie: he could not tell a lie without doing rude violence to his better nature; the reasons against lying have become with him a ruling instinct. In other words he has been led by law or rule, as by a servant of the God Who has arranged his education, to the school of principle.

Well, Brethren, this is what happened on a great scale in God's religious education of the world. St. Paul describes the condition of the people of Israel as that of an heir to a great property, who, while he is a child, practically lives the life of a servant, though he is really lord or proprietor of the estate; he is "under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father."³

God began with rule; He gave the Mosaic Law, and the moral parts of that Law, being also laws of God's

³ Gal. iv. 1, 2.

essential Nature, could not possibly be abrogated. But as rules of life, the Ten Commandments were only a preparation for something beyond them. In the earlier Revelation, God said, "Do this," "Eschew that." In the later or Christian Revelation, He did much more; He said in effect, "Join yourselves by an adhesion of your whole moral nature to the Perfect Moral Being;" in other words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." When you have done this, and He, accepting your faith, has in His appointed ways, by His Spirit and His Sacraments, infused into you His Divine Life, so that you are one with Him, you will not depend mainly on rules of conduct. You will not disobey them; knowingly to disobey them will be for you impossible.⁴ But they will have ceased to be merely outward rules through being absorbed into the life of principle. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"⁵ "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."⁶ The whole question has been already decided on higher ground; and thus we see the Apostle's meaning when he says that "what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh,"—that is, through the inability of fallen human nature to obey it,—"God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the Flesh" which He made His own, "that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."⁷

⁴ 1 St. John iii. 9; v. 18. ⁵ Rom. vi. 2. ⁶ Gal. v. 24. ⁷ Rom. viii. 3, 4.

III.

Such, then, is one great aspect of justification by faith. It is so far from being moral anarchy, that it is the absorption of rule into the higher life of principle. "Faith" corresponds to the empire of principle, in the growth of individual character, and in the development of national progress; while "the law" answers to that elementary stage in which outward rules are not yet absorbed into principles. And this leads to one or two practical remarks.

Why do the children of excellent parents often turn out so badly? Why is there ever any truth in the comparison of the sons of admirable clergymen to the sons of Pericles—or to the sons of Eli?

Here we must avoid the danger of attempting to account for all the instances by a single reason. But what is the reason of some, if not of many of the failures, about which I am thinking? Is it not that parents, when bringing up their children, forget the Divine order; first Rule, then Principle; first Moses, then Christ?

Many a parent seems to think that the inverse of this order is the road to educational success. He says to himself, that the severe education of children two generations or one generation ago was a great mistake. He will have no rules for his children, but will try to supply them with fine, and true, and elevating principles. Thus chil-

dren are talked to about sentiments, and feelings, and general principles of conduct, which they do not understand; while they are allowed all the while to have their own way, and there is no approach to discipline in their early life. Yet a child's mind understands the concrete, not the abstract; it understands a rule enforced by a reward or a penalty; it does not understand a principle. And if it has no rules to obey and is only dosed with principles, or what are said to be such, it is not educated at all. The foolish parent thinks that the time for applying rule will come when the boy is approaching manhood, and finds himself surrounded by temptations. But the boy who has never learnt to obey a rule when he was six or eight years old, will not obey anything very easily, be it rule or principle, when he is nearly twenty. No! education must begin with the discipline of the law, with tender discipline if you will, but still with real discipline, if it is to end safely in the freedom of a life of principle. You cannot begin with Christ and go back to Moses, in education or in anything else; and a thoughtless sentimentalism which ventures on the experiment is doomed beforehand to the most cruel of human disappointments.

Here, too, we have a word for the guidance of Church government and discipline. A Christian Church, from the necessity of the case, is based on faith, that is on principle: it represents by its existence the definitive triumph of believing principle over merely outward

correspondence with rule. It does not discard rule, far from it, but it provides for the good to be achieved by rule, by insisting on the higher influence of principle. Thus the true characteristics of the Church's life would seem to be stern adherence to principle, combined with generous freedom as to all that touches mere outward rule. In modern and practical language, Holy Scripture, the Three Catholic Creeds, and those organic conditions whereby the transmission of the means of grace is assured from age to age, would be maintained and defended to the last extremity, because they feed and protect that living and working faith which is the governing and informing principle of the Church's life. In matters of mere ceremonial there should be, on the contrary, as much freedom as is compatible with the elementary requirements of order. Where the Faith is held sincerely, rules of outward observance may be largely left to take care of themselves; the margin of liberty within which devotional feeling, representing very different stages of spiritual growth, finds congenial and varying expression, should surely, if the Apostle is to decide, be as wide as possible.

We can imagine, it may be, a different condition of things from this. We can imagine a Church in which principle, that is adhesion to the truths of Faith, is regarded as of comparatively little moment, while rules concerning strictly outward matters are treated as vital. We can imagine a Church which thus instructs her

ministers: "Bid men hope what you will as to the penalties which await the lost in the life to come, even although the Author of your Faith should have taught, in the plainest words, that those penalties last for ever.⁸ Maintain, if you like, that your Bible is honeycombed with mistakes and legends, provided only that you do not maintain it too coarsely and too provokingly. But beware—oh! beware—of the crime for which our modern wisdom practically reserves its sternest condemnations, the crime of wearing a vestment too many or a vestment too few; since this error may perchance expose you to ruder punishments than any which are at the disposal of a spiritual society." We can imagine, I had said, a Christian Church holding this language; but I correct myself—we cannot imagine it. We can only suppose, that if she should seem thus to speak, some other ruling influence than hers must, for the moment, have taken the seat of her own pastors, and that it is using terms which they would fain repudiate if they could.⁹

⁸ The reference in this and the following sentence is to the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the cases "*Wilson v. Fendall*" and "*Williams v. Bishop of Salisbury*." That no reference was or could be intended to any particular clergyman at the present day must be plain from the context. The practical attitude of the modern interpretations of Church law towards the rejection both of our Lord's teaching respecting the Future World, and of the received belief of the Christian Church respecting Holy Scripture, on the one hand, is contrasted with its practical attitude towards what has been in recent years for the first time ruled to be an illegal ceremonial, on the other.

⁹ The Judgments above referred to reversed that of the old Ecclesiastical

There are few men in ancient history to whom more injustice has been done, ay, in the pulpits of the Christian Church, than Junius Annæus Gallio, who was proconsul of Achaia in the year of our Lord 53, when St. Paul was conducting his great mission in Corinth. In thousands of sermons, Gallio has been held up to pitying condemnation as the typical example of indifference to the great concerns of religion; whereas in point of fact Gallio was a Roman magistrate of the highest character, who had a clear idea of the subjects which did and did not fall properly within his jurisdiction. His well-known brother Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, said of Gallio that he was loved by everybody; and Seneca dedicated to him two of his treatises, in terms which show us what he thought of his brother's disposition. Gallio, we all remember, refused to listen to the Jews when they dragged St. Paul before his tribunal, on the ground that he was asked to interfere in what seemed to him to be a matter of "words and names;"¹ words and names relating to the profound questions which, as we Christians know, divided the faith of St. Paul and the Christian Church from the beliefs of the Jewish synagogue. But let us suppose that Gallio, pagan as he was, had taken a different view of his duty; that he had undertaken to decide, not merely the worth of St. Paul's theological position,

Court of Arches. And they were publicly dissented from in important particulars, by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

¹ Acts xviii. 12, 15.

as against the claims of the synagogue, but also those various questions, internal to the Christian Church, which St. Paul discusses in his first Epistle to the Corinthians; the rivalries between the disciples of Paul, and Cephas, and Apollos,² the penalty due to the incestuous Corinthian,³ the advisability of marriage or of single life in Christians,⁴ the lawfulness of the use of meat offered in sacrifice to idols,⁵ the dress of Christian women in Christian churches,⁶ the behaviour of Christians at the Holy Communion,⁷ or—graver far—the relation of those who denied the Resurrection of the dead to the faith of the Christian Church.⁸ If we could imagine Gallio first studying and then pronouncing on these subjects, can we imagine how St. Paul would have received his conclusions?⁹ . . . My Brethren, we are here altogether in the region of the imaginary; but this at least is certain, that to lay great emphasis upon minute ceremonial rules in an ancient Christian Church is not in accordance with the Divine plan of education, whether of the Church or of the world; and that when an emphasis is laid on such rules, not by the Church herself, but by some other than a properly Church authority, the divergence from that plan is greatly aggravated, and the prospect of resulting confusion indefinitely enlarged. In Church policy not less than in education it is impossible to go back with impunity from Christ to Moses.

² 1 Cor. i. 12.

³ 1 Cor. v. 1, 2.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii.

⁵ 1 Cor. viii.

⁶ 1 Cor. xi. 3—16.

⁷ 1 Cor. xi. 18—34.

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 12—19.

⁹ Cf. 1 Cor. vi. 1.

But lastly, and above all, here we see what must be the main effort of a Christian life. We Christians are justified by faith; by taking our Lord at His word; by believing what He has told us about Himself; by clinging with the whole strength of our inmost life to Him, the Perfect Moral Being, Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, Ascended, for us men, and for our salvation. When this act of adhesion, which we call faith, is sincere, all else will follow. The life of principle implies, as a matter of course, all the results that could be secured by the life of rule. United with Christ by faith, we share His righteousness;¹ we are before the eyes of the All Holy what we should be, not through our own merits, but through His.² God grant that we may all know, with increasing clearness, the happiness of this vital union; since it is the end of God's wisdom in the education of each one of us and of the world; since it is the condition which alone enables us to look forward with hope and peace to the dread hour of the Judgment.

¹ Gal. iii. 26.

² Eph. i. 6.

SERMON IV.

The Power of Martyrdom.

“Each trial has its weight, which whoso bears,
Knows his own woe, and need of succouring grace;
The martyr’s hope half wipes away the trace
Of flowing blood; the while life’s humblest cares
Smart more, because they hold in Holy Writ no place.”

Lyra Apostolica.

SERMON IV.

The Power of Martyrdom.

“And Saul was consenting unto his death.”—ACTS viii. 1.

ONE of the greatest demands which the Church makes on us in following her services during the whole course of the Christian year is when she summons us to pass abruptly from Christmas Day to the Feast of St. Stephen, the first of the martyrs. It is indeed a sharp and exacting change. It is a change from rest to tumult. Yesterday we were sharing the peaceful joy of the Holy Family; to-day we follow the outbreak and violence of a crowd of fierce and implacable passions. It is a change from a higher to a lower world. There we were joining in the angel song, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace;” here our ears are deafened by the howlings of an irrational and infuriated mob. It is a change from a glorious sunrise to a lowering sunset. There the King of Angels was ushered into the world which He had made, born in due time of a Virgin-Mother; here the first of a great multitude who have been witnesses to the Kingdom and patience of Jesus,¹ lies down in agony upon

¹ Rev. i. 9.

the sod to die; and the first note of that plea which will last above until the Judgment, forthwith begins: "How long, O Lord, how long!"²

At a scene like St. Stephen's martyrdom, it is a relief to place ourselves, if we can, in the position of some one bystander, to follow his thoughts and to share his sympathies.

All must feel this with respect to that far more momentous and awful scene which St. Stephen's martyrdom inevitably suggests. We cannot, on Calvary, stand quite in front of the Cross, and look the Divine Sufferer straight in the face. It is enough for you and me to associate ourselves in thought with some one of those near to Him; with the heart-broken Mother, with the beloved disciple, with the devout centurion, with the dying and penitent thief, or—as best suits the case of most of us—with the weeping Magdalen. There is a picture by a great modern artist which represents the nearer friends of Jesus huddled into a dark room, and gazing furtively out of a small aperture at the march of the procession up the hill of Calvary; and that which gives to this work of art its pathetic and indisputable power is that it recognizes the reserve under which alone the human soul can bear to look out of itself at what is really greatest in human history.

Something of the same kind, only, of course, on a very different scale, is true of the death of St. Stephen, and

² Rev. vi. 9, 10.

indeed of every similar event. It is better to contemplate every such tragical occurrence from a single point of view ; to master it as it appeared to some one person ; to renounce as beyond our powers any attempt to comprehend it as a whole, and in all its bearings.

I.

Stephen died, as has been already said, surrounded by and at the hands of an infuriated mob ; but Holy Scripture guides us to regard the scene as though there were practically before us two persons, and only two. There is the martyr at the supreme moment of his suffering and his glory : and there is also “a young man whose name was Saul.”³ For the sacred writer the others do not exist, except as mere nameless ministers of evil ; while Saul is there as, for the time being, the antithesis to Stephen ; young, as Stephen was young ; enthusiastic, as Stephen was enthusiastic ; as passionately attached to the creed of the Pharisees as was Stephen to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If Stephen was willing to shed his blood, Saul was not unwilling that Stephen’s blood should be shed : “Saul was consenting unto his death.” And this mental disposition of Saul’s took shape in a public act. According to the rules of criminal procedure in the Mosaic code, the witnesses who de-

³ Acts vii. 58.

nounced a violator of the Law were to take the lead in his execution.⁴ The men who had reported Stephen's words to the Sanhedrim stripped themselves for their dreadful task; and by undertaking to guard their clothes, Saul was understood publicly to express his approval of what they were doing. As he said of himself, in an after-time, with bitter self-reproach, "I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."⁵

As we know St. Paul in the Epistles of his later years, we have no difficulty in saying that if he had any one characteristic gift, it was sympathy. No class of men, no form of error or of suffering, is beyond the range of his generous anxieties; and if there is any single description of persons for whom he has always a thought of true kindness, it is those to whom on religious grounds he is most entirely opposed. In his later life he was an object of continual persecutions, as he tells the Thessalonians, on the part of his unconverted countrymen;⁶ and yet who can forget the pathetic passages in which he describes the great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart which he experiences on account of their exclusion from the Fold of Jesus Christ:⁷ or how he would be gladly made anathema for them:⁸ or how fondly he dwells on their ancient religious privileges;⁹ or how he protests what is his own heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel?¹

⁴ Deut. xvii. 7.

⁵ Acts xxii. 20.

⁶ 1 Thess. ii. 15.

⁷ Rom. ix. 2.

⁸ Rom. ix. 3.

⁹ Rom. ix. 4, 5.

¹ Rom. x. 1.

Sympathy with the ignorant and with those that are out of the way ; still more, sympathy with the suffering, as with the slave Onesimus, were a part of Saul's nature. In later years, no doubt these dispositions were raised and refined by grace : but they had belonged to his original character ; and we ask ourselves, how could he have ever brought himself to look on approvingly while life was being crushed out of the body of a young man, and for using words which in later years would have commanded his own warmest admiration ?

Saul consented to this tragedy. Why ?

First of all, he was following the stream of general opinion. The whole world of Jerusalem, excepting what looked like a small sect, was agreed that Stephen deserved his fate. The learned said so : the governing class said so : and the people said so. "They ran upon him with one accord."² Few men have strength of character to hold their own against a great consenting force of opinion, even when they know that they are certainly right : and as yet Saul of Tarsus had no such reason for resisting ; his convictions were with those of the majority. So he consented to Stephen's death.

For Saul was also moved by the instincts of religious loyalty. In his eyes Stephen was a rebel against authority. Saul was a Pharisee ; and not long before Stephen's trial the Pharisees had gained an ascendancy in the direction of religious affairs in Jerusalem. The Sadducees, con-

² Acts vii. 57.

servative as to all that touched existing institutions, but lax, almost sceptical, as to matters of faith, would not have commanded Saul's hearty allegiance. But authority was now in Saul's eyes religious, and it was intolerable to him that it should be defied. Yet how was Saul to understand Stephen's reported menace, that "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered"?³ What was Saul to make, either of the method or of the purpose of Stephen's appeals to the sacred history of Israel? The Crucifixion had only happened some nine months before, and it was fresh in everybody's mind. What, then, was Stephen's object in referring to Joseph's ill-treatment at the hands of his brethren;⁴ to the rejection of Moses by his countrymen;⁵ to the exaltation of Abraham,⁶ and Joseph,⁷ and Moses⁸ in their successive generations, in spite of surrounding adverse influences? Stephen's hearers, and Saul among the rest, fully understood the intended drift of this allusive treatment of ancient history; and, indeed, before he had finished speaking Stephen dropped the veil. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye."⁹ What was Saul to think of such language, addressed to men for whom age and position, as well as their reputation for learning and goodness, had secured a first place in his mind among human objects of reverence.

³ Acts vi. 14.⁴ Acts vii. 9.⁵ Acts vii. 27.⁶ Acts vii. 8.⁷ Acts vii. 10.⁸ Acts vii. 35.⁹ Acts vii. 51.

Clearly Stephen was an insolent rebel against all that was best in Israel. Therefore Saul was consenting unto his death.

But Saul was also guided by the promptings of piety. What was the charge against Stephen? "We" said the witnesses, have heard him speak calumnious words against Moses and against God.¹ "This man," said they, "ceaseth not to speak calumnious words against this holy place and the law."² That Stephen had ever said anything calumnious against God is incredible: this was an inference which the witnesses drew for themselves from what he did say. But no doubt he preached to the Christians against attending the temple worship. For some time after the day of Pentecost the Apostles, and all their baptized converts, continued to join in the temple services,³ just as though they had still been Jews; while they had their own Sacraments and prayers in private houses⁴ in Jerusalem. But this state of things could not last. It was irreconcilable with the world-wide mission of the Divine Redeemer, and with the duties of an universal Church. And St. Stephen, soon after his ordination as Deacon, was one of the first to break through it. Accordingly he proclaimed, that in the history of God's dealings with the first fathers of the race there was nothing to show that God's grace and presence were confined even to the promised land, much less to a particular spot in it.

¹ Acts vi. 11.

² Acts vi. 13.

³ Acts iii. 1, cf. ii. 46.

⁴ Acts ii. 42, 46.

This is why, in his defence, he insists on God's appearance to Abraham in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,⁵ on Abraham's not having even a resting-place for his feet in the Holy Land itself,⁶ on the sojourning of Abraham's descendants in a strange land,⁷ on the education of Moses in Egypt,⁸ and the exile of Moses in Midian.⁹ This is his reason for pointing out that the law had been given, not in Palestine, but on Sinai;¹ that the ground on which Moses stood at the vision of the burning bush, though it was only the ground of the desert, yet was holy;² this is why he dwells on the long years that elapsed before the Tabernacle of David was prepared;³ this is why he reminds his hearers that when at length the temple had been built, prophecy, by the mouth of Isaiah, did not shrink from proclaiming that God's throne was in heaven, while His footstool was the earth, and that no human building could compass the Infinite Creator.⁴ For Stephen, the Church's freedom from the duty of attending the temple service was a conviction rooted in his study of early sacred history as illuminated by the Faith of Christ. But for Saul it was a blasphemous novelty; it was an attack on claims and on duties which all good Jews held in reverence. Stephen was an assailant of the temple. And to attack the temple was by implication to attack the Law which sanctioned and protected it; and to attack

⁵ Acts vii. 2.⁶ Acts vii. 5.⁷ Acts vii. 6.⁸ Acts vii. 20, 22.⁹ Acts vii. 29.¹ Acts vii. 38.² Acts vii. 33.³ Acts vii. 44—47.⁴ Acts vii. 49, cf. Isa. lxi. 1.

the Law was to attack its Author, Almighty God Himself. Charges of constructive heresy, are often like charges of constructive treason ; but to Saul's mind the case against Stephen was made out, and he had no doubt as to what should follow. Saul was consenting unto his death.

II.

Saul was consenting ; and the bloody work went forward until all was over, and devout men had carried the bruised and mangled form of the martyr to his burial. Saul was consenting ; and he would fain plunge more deeply into the work of persecution.⁵ But when all was over, the memories of what had passed came back, unwelcome but irresistibly, to the mind of the young Rabbi ; and, as he saw Stephen's death in the retrospect, he felt the force of three forms of power which will ever assert themselves within the soul of man. These are the power of suffering, the power of sanctity, and the power of truth.

Suffering is power ; at least when it is voluntary. The sight of a fellow-creature meeting pain and death from which he might escape if he would, and for some motive which is perhaps only half comprehended by the bystanders, stirs in all of us a deep-feeling which belongs to our common nature. Even when, as in the case of

⁵ Acts ix. 1, cf. viii. 3.

some Eastern fanatics, the suffering is undergone for an object which our reason must condemn, much sympathy remains : and we cannot reason ourselves out of it, since it is rooted in a district of our nature which is beyond logic. Yes, suffering is power ; and this power is great in proportion to the sacrifice which the pain involves. The voluntary death of the very old, the involuntary death of the very young, touch us less than the spectacle of a young man, just reaching the maturity of his faculties, and conscious of what they mean and promise, yet willingly resigning them by undergoing tortures which it is in his power to decline. For he gives not merely his best, but the best which human nature has to give ; he gives his life, when it is as yet unimpaired by the premonitory advances of decay which come with years. Everything is before him ; he knows it ; but he yields it all up amid a tempest of ignominy and pain, for the sake of some better object, clearly present to his understanding and having control of his will. So it was with Stephen when he first stood before the Sanhedrim. He might have conciliated the High Priest had he chosen to do so ;⁶ but he chose so to speak that at the end of his speech he could no longer have averted his fate. He knew what he was doing ; he invited the consequences that followed : and Saul, as he remembered the first, and then the second volley of stones which crushed out Stephen's young life, felt, depend on it, the power of suffering. The form of

⁶ Acts vii. 1.

the dying Stephen would have haunted his memory; it would have suggested a world of thought beyond itself.

And sanctity is power. It is a greater power than suffering, but greatest, perhaps, when associated with suffering. Stephen was not merely a good man; he was holy. We all of us recognize the difference. Goodness means keeping clear of what is evil; holiness means a temper and spirit that is all its own, and that reflects a higher sphere of being. Of the seven deacons, Stephen alone is described "as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."⁷ His wonders and miracles are accounted for by his being "full of faith and power."⁸ This inward sanctity illuminated his bodily frame, so that when he took his place before his judges in the Sanhedrim, "all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."⁹ And the secret and character of this sanctity was made plain when he came to die. The great scene at Calvary had not been lost upon the first witness to its world-redeeming power: and the two cries which escaped the dying martyr were echoes of two of the Seven Words upon the Cross. Of these, Stephen began with the last: "O, Lord Jesu, receive my spirit!"¹ He ended with the first: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."²

Ah! we may try to ignore the power of a holy life, and still more of a holy death; but there is that in our

⁷ Acts vi. 5.

⁸ Acts vi. 8.

⁹ Acts vi. 15.

¹ Acts vii. 59, cf. St. Luke xxiii. 46. ² Acts vii. 60, cf. St. Luke xxiii. 34.

nature which, in spite of our baser selves, insists on responding to it. We cannot shake it out of our memories; we cannot withdraw our moral sense from its empire; whether we will or not, it controls us in many a subtle and unperceived vein of feeling; it does this long before we do it final justice, and yield ourselves unreservedly to its magnificent fascination. The holiness of Stephen dying was not lost upon Saul; but time was needed ere it could exhibit its commanding power.

And truth is power; when it has no longer only an abstract existence, but has taken possession of a living mind and will. When Saul of Tarsus first heard of Stephen's declaration that the temple and the Law belonged to a past dispensation, his whole soul rose against what seemed to be an utterance at issue with the truths that were dearest to his heart. And as he followed Stephen's appeal to the sacred past—an appeal in which the patriarchal and Jewish history was for the first time presented to him in an entirely new light—he doubtless regarded it as only a fine specimen of the sophistry by which error endeavours to look like truth. All this ground had long been familiar to him; but it had been traversed under the guidance of a totally different tradition. Could it be supposed that this young Hellenist had the key to the real drift and meaning of the sacred history, and that the great masters of learning in the Rabbinical schools were hopelessly wrong?

And yet it is clear that the ideas which are prominent

IV.] *St. Stephen's influence on St. Paul's writings.* 77

in Stephen's dying speech haunted the memory of Saul of Tarsus, and did their work when the tragedy outside the city gate was over. It has been remarked more than once,³ that the great doctrinal positions which are illustrated with such fulness in St. Paul's Epistles exist in the germ in the speech of St. Stephen. The treatment of the patriarchal age as religiously more important than the age of the Law⁴ becomes in St. Paul's hands, when writing to the Galatians, the superiority of the Promise to the Law which could not disannul it.⁵ The elevation of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses to positions of religious leadership, by Divine choice⁶ and not for reasons of existing position or accomplishments, foreshadows the doctrine of grace in opposition to that of natural or human merit in the Epistle to the Romans.⁷ The essential spirituality of worship proclaimed by Stephen⁸ is the lever with which St. Paul lifts into view the universality of Redemption and the world-wide mission of the Apostolic Church.⁹ The temper which Stephen denounced in his judges¹ is denounced in very similar terms by St. Paul in his Epistles to the Thessalonians² and the Romans,³ and in his sermon at Antioch,⁴ and in his address at Rome.⁵ Stephen's dying words had evidently clung to him; and when he had gained, by his conversion, the key to

³ As especially by Baur, 'Paulus der Apostel,' i. 2.

⁴ Acts vii. 2—17.

⁵ Gal. iii. 17.

⁶ Acts vii. 2, 10, 35.

⁷ Rom. ix. 16—19.

⁸ Acts vii. 48.

⁹ Rom. x. 12—15.

¹ Acts vii. 51—53.

² 1 Thess. ii. 14—16.

³ Rom. xi. 7—10.

⁴ Acts xiii. 40, 41.

⁵ Acts xxviii. 25—27.

Stephen's meaning, Stephen's very phrases were cherished, as invested with associations most precious and sacred.

In the true martyr, then, we find truth, sanctity, and suffering, which combine to invest him with his peculiar glory among the servants of God. These three—truth, sanctity, suffering, each of them in its perfection, meet in Jesus our Divine Lord; Who, Martyr as He was, was also so much more than the very first of martyrs. But, such is our human weakness, that these characteristics never meet in unimpaired perfection in any one of Christ's dying followers. It always has been, it always must be easy to point out some flaw in the highest of merely human characters; in the men who have done and suffered most for God's glory and for man's true interests. But the grandeur and power of martyrdom will survive the carping attacks of a petty criticism, which is itself probably incapable of a single generous resolution to do or to endure; nor is it destroyed by the more serious danger of spurious imitation. "There have been false martyrs," you say. Of course there have. Every beautiful thing in Christendom has in turn been travestied; precisely because, in this strange world of ours, the beautiful provokes the appearance of the hideous, the right that of the wrong, the true that of the false, the original that of the caricature. Our Lord said that there would be false Christs;⁶ we all know that there have been false miracles⁷ in abundance. But the false miracle

⁶ St. Matt. xxiv. 24.

⁷ 2 Thess. ii. 9.

implies the existence of the true; the false Christ throws us back on the One object of our adoration; and in like manner the false martyr does but serve as a foil to the martyr in truth and deed, such as was Stephen. Saul of Tarsus lived to name in his prayer to Jesus "Thy martyr Stephen,"^s to the shedding of whose blood he had himself consented; he at least had no doubt that the conditions of a true martyrdom had been fulfilled before his eyes on the day when Stephen died.

III.

The presence of Saul of Tarsus at the martyrdom of St. Stephen suggests some final considerations.

It shows us what is the view which a Christian should take of an opponent of Christian truth, whether on a larger or a smaller scene. An opponent, however fierce, is always to be regarded as a possible convert and ally. He may be a party to the worst outrages against justice and charity; and yet there is, depend upon it, a corner in his heart which is not beyond the reach of God's grace, not beyond the pathetic and commanding influence of truth. Often indeed men resist truth all the more fiercely, when they already, but unconsciously, admit its force, and are afraid of finding themselves submitting to its claims; they try by precipitate action to arrest the silent dictates of the reason and the heart; they keep the

^s Acts xxii. 20.

raiment of the murderers, lest by a sudden impulse they should take their place side by side with the victim. Meanwhile, He who is the Truth has them in His keeping, and has far-reaching purposes of grace and mercy in store for them. They too are to be thought and spoken of tenderly; probably they are already nearly setting out on the road to Damascus.

Next, we here learn what persecution can and what it cannot do. It can put down a given form of opinion or belief, if the persecutor can, and is prepared to, exterminate. In this way Christianity was crushed out of Northern Africa in the fifth, and out of Japan in the seventeenth century. In this way the Inquisition stamped out Protestantism in Spain; in this way Roman Catholicism was stamped out, for a while, by Calvinism in Geneva, and by Lutheranism in Sweden. What is wanted is sufficient force, a clearly-conceived purpose, and ruthless determination. If persecution does not exterminate, it only fans the flame which it vain would quench. The English Reformation owes less to the preaching of the Reformers than to the fires of Smithfield. The Church of the first centuries is really more indebted to the persecuting emperors, than to the emperors who were philosophically or contemptuously tolerant. The Church of Jerusalem was for the moment dispersed by the death of St. Stephen and by the persecution which followed; it was dispersed, only that it might reassemble with larger hopes and a wider experience; it seemed to die back,

IV.] *Wicked folly, of Christians who persecute.* 81

that it might presently expand from an unknown community in a provincial city into the world-embracing Home of souls.

And hence we may take note of the criminal folly of persecution, at least in all who name the Name of Christ. It has been said by a great living historian, whose labours have conducted him over a period of our history which religious passion, from more sides than one, has stained with blood; that if you sincerely believe in a religious creed you must punish its opponents, because a murderer of souls is a greater criminal than a murderer of bodies. This is a natural view of the case for a man to take who endeavours by an effort of imagination to realize how religious truth would look to a believer in it, but who not unnaturally overlooks the conditions by which, in a believer's mind, faith always is, or ought to be, accompanied. To recognize the converting office of the Holy Spirit is to feel that persecution is a crime; since it is an attempt to achieve by outward and mechanical violence, results which, to be worth anything before God, can only be the product of His illuminating grace. To silence is not necessarily to convince; and until conviction has been achieved, mere silence is religiously worthless. No, Brethren, the attempt to propagate or to suppress religious conviction by "cruel mockings and scourgings," or by "bonds and imprisonments,"⁹ was appropriate on the part of pagan persecutors; but true Christians must

⁹ Heb. xi. 36.

still proclaim with the Apostle, that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal."¹

Here, too, above all we discern the signal service which the martyrs have rendered to the world. The martyr may be unlearned and simple, he may be poor and uninfluential, but he achieves a great work. He raises the general idea of a religious creed from the level of the merely relative to the level of the absolute; he raises it in thousands of minds from the rank of opinion to that of certainty. For everybody knows that mere opinion about religious matters does not reasonably warrant a man in dying for it. We might die for the certain; we content ourselves with arguing in favour of the probable; or, if we are not allowed to argue, we hold our tongues. That which we hold as only probably true may, we feel, be conceivably false: and therefore to make for it the last and greatest of sacrifices—to stake our all upon it—would be unreasonable. But Truth as distinct from opinion, does warrant these sacrifices; and the martyr who makes them enriches his country and his age; enriches the Church and the human race with a new and invigorating idea of what Truth, in its absolute and sacred essence, is and means. And therefore, while other sufferers die and are forgotten, the martyr rightly has his place in the Calendar of the Church, and in the hearts and memories of her faithful children.

"I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and

IV.] *Claim of Martyrs on our reverence and love.* 83

them that had gotten the victory over the beast and over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty : just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints.”²

As the years pass, we learn the value of that lesson. All is passing. This very week the gifted writer who knew how to trace with finished exactness the inmost recesses of character,³ and the accomplished and kindly naturalist, whose observations have opened out to this generation unsuspected fields of knowledge, and who, in his most intimate study of nature, never failed to recognize Nature’s God,⁴ have disappeared from among us into the Unseen. At no distant date we each of us must follow. And among our fellow-creatures, none surely so brace us for meeting that which lies before us, as the men to whom the future world and the Divine Redcemer Who is its Interpreter and its Monarch were so real, that they shed their blood to attest this reality ; none have a greater claim on our grateful reverence than that noble and now almost countless army which for eighteen centuries, in all the countries of the world, has been painfully taking that road to heaven along which St. Stephen led the way.

² Rev. xv. 2, 3.

³ George Eliot.

⁴ Francis Trevelyan Buckland, died Dec. 19, 1880.

Appendix.

THE subjoined address will not be without interest, in relation to the subjects discussed in the Preface. It has since received the adhesion of more than 2000 clergymen.

TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

Your Grace has been pleased to invite those of the Clergy, who feel dissatisfied or alarmed at the present circumstances of the Church, to state what they desire, in the way of remedy. Encouraged by this invitation, we venture to submit to your Grace the following suggestions.

First of all, and especially, we would respectfully express our desire for a distinctly avowed policy of toleration and forbearance, on the part of our Ecclesiastical Superiors, in dealing with questions of Ritual. Such a policy appears to us to be demanded alike by justice and by the best interests of religion. For justice would seem to require, that, unless a rigid observance of the Rubrical Law of the Church, or of recent interpretations of it, be equally exacted from all the parties within her pale, it should no longer be exacted from one party alone, and under circumstances which often increase the difficulty of complying with the demand. And, having regard to the uncertainties which have been widely thought to surround some recent interpretations of Ecclesiastical Law, as well as to the equitable claims of Congregations placed in the most dissimilar religious circumstances, we cannot but think that the recognized toleration of even

wide diversities of ceremonial is alone consistent with the interests of true religion, and with the well-being of the English Church at the present time.

The immediate need of our Church is, in our opinion, a tolerant recognition of divergent Ritual practice ; but, we feel bound to submit to your Grace that our present troubles are likely to recur, unless the Courts by which Ecclesiastical causes are decided, in the first instance and on appeal, can be so constructed as to secure the conscientious obedience of Clergymen who believe the constitution of the Church of Christ to be of divine appointment ; and who protest against the State's encroachment upon rights, assured to the Church of England by solemn Acts of Parliament. We do not presume to enter into details upon a subject, confessedly surrounded with great difficulties ; but content ourselves with expressing an earnest hope that it may receive the attention of your Grace, and of the Bishops of the Church of England.

We are,

Your Grace's very obedient Servants,

London, Jan. 10, 1881.

R. W. CHURCH, Dean of St. Paul's.

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B. M. COWIE, D.D., Dean of Manchester.

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